

IN THE CLUTCHES OF THE TCHEKA



by

BORIS CEDERHOLM



Arrested by the Bolsheviks on a trumped-up charge, the author of this exciting personal record was imprisoned for eighteen months and finally sent to the terrible Solovetsky Islands concentration camp. This book is filled with first-hand evidence of conditions in Soviet Russia.

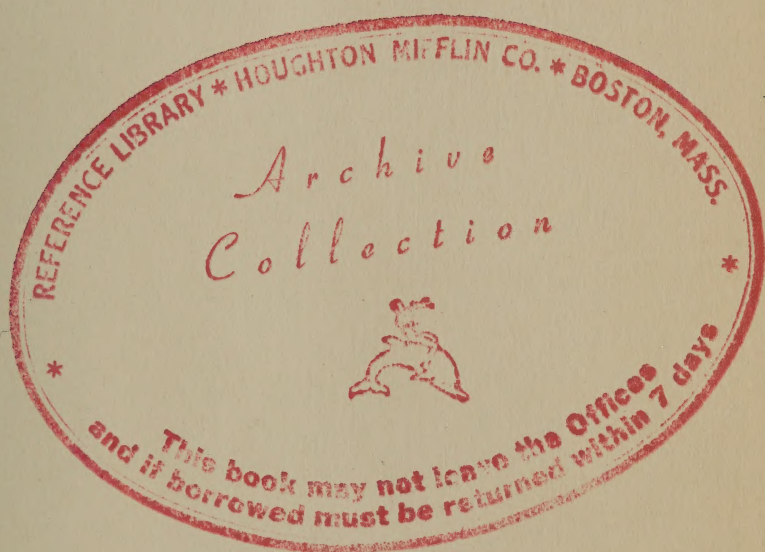
THE DIARY OF A RUM-RUNNER

By Alastair Moray

THE rum-running described by Mr. Alastair Moray, who was supercargo of the vessel, was carried on in a four-masted schooner appropriately called the Cask, with a registered tonnage of 390 tons. The Cask loaded up with whisky at Glasgow and took on more cargo at Havre and Madeira. The cruise lasted from September to the following August.

Here is a plain, unvarnished, day-by-day account of experiences off New York with a crazy ship, a mutinous crew, lurking hi-jackers, and inquisitive revenue men.





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BORIS CEDERHOLM

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THE TCHEKA

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY
F. H. LYON



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PREFACE

FROM 1924 TO 1926 the Soviet Government—or, to be more accurate, the Tcheka—detained me, a foreigner, guiltless of any offence, in various prisons, and finally sent me to the Solovetsky concentration camp for three years—without trial, but simply by the authority of the Gpu (Tcheka).

My transportation to the Solovetsky Islands took place *after* the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs had sent a note stating that I was to be released, which shows that even the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs is powerless against the Tcheka.

Thanks to the vigorous intervention of the Finnish Government, I was only six weeks in the Solovetsky Islands, but the short period I spent there was the equivalent of many years in the severest of European prisons.

The shameless cynicism and cruelty of my treatment in Soviet Russia are so incredible that I have thought it necessary to quote a few extracts from the correspondence between the Finnish Consulate-General in Petrograd and the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs regarding my "case", as well as one or two other documents.

I have in my narrative sometimes given fictitious names to people I met, and altered various facts concerning their lives, but only when I have thought it necessary to do so in order to protect persons still living within the reach of the Gpu (Tcheka).

B. CEDERHOLM

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IN THE CLUTCHES OF THE TCHEKA

CHAPTER I

Why I Went to Russia—Slow Negotiations in Finland—Departure for Petrograd—A Sceptical Dutchman—Crossing the Frontier—Gloomy Fellow-passengers—First Impressions of Petrograd

I WENT TO RUSSIA at the end of the summer of 1923 as representative of a South American firm which exported materials used in tanning. My visit was not a casual one, but had been arranged a long time before. The new economic policy of the Soviet Government ("Nep") had from the time of its initiation attracted the attention of our directors. Many foreign business men saw in "Nep" the resurrection of Russian industry, believing that it would open the door for the supply of the Russian market with large quantities of raw material.

I personally was very sceptical regarding all reports of brilliant advantages to be gained from trade with the Soviet Government, but I was at last obliged to give way to the wishes of my principals, who hinted broadly that I was scantily informed as to the actual state of the Soviet Russian market and Soviet trade policy.

On the receipt of detailed instructions from my firm, I opened negotiations with the Soviet trade representative at Helsingfors regarding the possibility of obtaining a concession for the exclusive and permanent importation of our goods for the use of the Soviet tanning industry. From the very start I observed that the Soviet trade delegation was hindered in its activities to an extraordinary degree by instructions from "the centre", i.e. Moscow. My negotiations proceeded with extreme slowness, and on every point, even the most insignificant, the trade delegation had to refer to Moscow. Nearly two and a half months were required to work out our agreement, containing forty-seven clauses. At last, however, the day came on which we were able to put our signatures to the agreement, and I had only to

wait till a credit was opened by the Soviet Government with one of the English banks. From the moment that was done our contract would become legally binding on both parties.

The fortnight within which, according to the terms of the contract, the credit was to be opened elapsed, but—it was not opened. After countless telegrams, negotiations and reminders, the trade delegation informed me that instructions had been received from Moscow for the ratification of our contract—in Petrograd, at the head offices of the tanning syndicate. In order that the whole affair might be carried through its different stages as quickly as possible, it was indispensable that I should come to Petrograd in person. And so I had to go.

The obtaining of a visa to enter the territory of the Soviet Republic took nearly six weeks, but at last I had got my visa, and at the end of the summer of 1923 I started for Petrograd.

I left Finland with a heavy heart, for I was going to a country where, despite “Nep” and the appearance of evolution, uncertainty, terror and tyranny held sway. The fact that up to the Revolution I had been an officer of the Russian Imperial Fleet caused me some uneasiness; for I had not thought that it would serve any purpose to conceal my former profession. I had entered on the form given me at the Soviet diplomatic mission as a preliminary to the granting of a visa: “Finnish citizen, commercial representative of the firm X. and Y., formerly Commander in the Russian Imperial Fleet.”

There would have been no sense or utility in concealing my former calling, for there could be no doubt whatever that the Tcheka knew I had once served in the Imperial Fleet. If I had not mentioned my old profession in filling up the form, it would only have made the Tcheka more suspicious of me. I had long ago abandoned my former calling and my officer’s rank, and since the Revolution and the separation of Finland from Russia I had devoted myself entirely to business. All this, without the slightest doubt, the Tcheka knew through its agents, seeing that it possesses the most detailed information about everyone who enters Soviet Russian territory.

.

After we left Viborg there were only two passengers in the carriage besides myself—a Dutch business man and his wife, a typical Russian lady. The Dutchman was the agent of a very big Dutch firm which had lately concluded an agreement with the Soviet Government for the granting of a concession. He had spent nearly the whole of 1922 and part of 1923 at Petrograd. Although he had at last succeeded in obtaining the concession, he was very sceptical, and had no confidence in the durability of contractual obligations entered into by the Soviet Government.

"We wait, and we shall see. My duty is to carry out my employers' wishes," he said; and turning to me with a smile, he concluded:

"And you will have to wait and see, too. But we must stop talking now, for we shall be at Terijoki station in a minute, and agents of the Finnish political police and secret agents of the Tcheka will get into our carriage. In general, remember my advice: the less you talk in Russia, the better. The Tcheka keeps a close watch on us, as foreigners."

Several new passengers got into the carriage at Terijoki. As yet unschooled by experience, I could not tell, hard as I tried, which of the passengers were spies and which were "our" agents and which "theirs".

After Rajajoki station, our carriage was shunted on to another line and we entered the frontier zone. For the last time the orderly, neat buildings of the Finnish station loomed up outside the carriage window; a worthy non-commissioned officer of the Finnish frontier guard came through the carriage and "surrendered" us—the Dutchman, his wife and myself—to an individual with an untidy military overcoat flung over his shoulders and wearing a Russian forage-cap the upper part of which was green.

We got out of the carriage at the Russian frontier station, Bieloostrov. It was very dirty and neglected. The customs examination of our luggage and the inspection of passports^m was to take place here. The walls of the station were gay with placards urging Soviet citizens to fight against corruption. Among

these were brightly painted appeals to subscribe to the agricultural gold loan. On the placard was depicted a peasant, as he is commonly presented on the stages of provincial theatres—neatly brushed and combed, in a red silk shirt and plush breeches thrust into high, polished boots. A charitable hand, belonging to some person unknown, was showering a rain of gold coins on the peasant, and underneath was printed in large letters: "Put all your savings into the gold loan, and some day you will be rich."

The Dutchman gave me a quiet nudge and ironically called my attention to the golden rain. "Not bad for a Communist Government, that," I thought: "'some day you will be rich'."

After the examination of our luggage and passport formalities, we got into a Russian carriage. From the windows we saw the gloomy landscape of Northern Russia, with tumbledown cottages scattered here and there, and skinny trees. There were a good many passengers in the carriage, poorly and untidily dressed. All the faces were of a dirty earthen colour, and wore an expression of intense uneasiness; nowhere a laugh or a smile. Two men in corner seats glanced at me now and again keenly and attentively. Under this hostile, penetrating stare I began to feel ashamed of my smart suit. The two men, in spite of the difference in their style of dress and in their outward appearance generally, had something intangible in common which made them resemble each other. I puzzled over what it could be that made these two men like each other and marked them out from the common herd of passengers. Suddenly a thought flashed through my brain: "Agents of the Tcheka."

"The devil take them, let them look," I said to myself determinedly, and buried myself in my paper.

At the station of what was formerly the Finnish Railway I said good-bye to the Dutchman, and then, to my great satisfaction, caught sight of our Consul-General in Petrograd, who had come to meet me.

Poorly, carelessly dressed people passed us. Youth was predominant everywhere. What a contrast to the St. Petersburg crowd in old days! Not a single intelligent face. All had the

same gloomy, concentrated stare; on every face was written *uneasiness*.

We drove in a motor-car along the well-known streets of Petrograd, which I had not seen for more than seven years. Petrograd made a dilapidated, bleached impression. Grey, bleached people, houses hurriedly painted, with fresh stucco flung over them all anyhow, depressions and holes in the pavement, over which our car bumped mercilessly. Crowds of young people of the working-class everywhere. The palaces and other buildings along the Neva were conspicuously painted. Some were adorned with inscriptions and placards, such as "Home of Rest for Workers", "Museum of Labour", and so on. The dominating impression was one of neglect, just as if it had all been done in a hurry, temporarily.

Our car stopped at No. 39 Ekaterinhofsky Prospect, a house belonging to the Finnish Government. Here live the Consul-General and the Consulate staff. The unoccupied rooms are allotted to Finlanders who come to Petrograd on various business errands. I was given a room in one of the wings, looking on to the courtyard.

CHAPTER II

Life at the Consulate—Gradual Enlightenment—The State Tanning Syndicate—A Communist's Luncheon-party—Soviet Restaurant Scenes

LIFE IN OUR HOUSE was well regulated. All the Consulate employees went to their work early in the morning. The Consulate was then in "Finland House", No. 26 Nevsky Prospect, on one floor of that enormous building. The unoccupied rooms were let to various Finnish business men as offices. Towards six o'clock in the evening we all came home and assembled for dinner in the large dining-room of our common abode. In the evening we generally stayed at home; we seldom went to the opera or the ballet. Our Russian acquaintances rarely came to see us, and such visits always caused us some uneasiness on their account, for the Tcheka sometimes arrested one of them on suspicion of espionage. After one of these occurrences we lost all our friends and acquaintances for the time being, and when we met in the street they "did not recognize" us nor we them. Several weeks used to pass like this, and then it all began again, often with the same consequences.

Our house, with its isolated life, entirely different from the gloomy and oppressive Soviet existence, was naturally an attraction to people who had suffered, who had once known better times. At our house, in a cultivated *milieu*, they could forget, if only for a moment, all the horror and misery of Soviet life.

.

In the earliest days of my life in Petrograd, I did not, I confess, perceive anything horrible. I even thought that all the stories of our acquaintances and utterances of the foreign newspapers about the abnormalities of Soviet life were immeasurably exaggerated.

I began to see how things really were as, in my daily worries with regard to my firm's business, I was brought into ever-closer contact with the Soviet organizations and Soviet life.

From the very start, my view that it was impossible to make any objectively grounded calculations or anticipations in business matters affecting the Soviet trade organizations was confirmed. The success of any trade negotiations depended solely on chance and on political considerations, seeing that trade was a monopoly in the hands of the Soviet Government, and trade policy was directed in accordance with the interests of the Communist International. I became convinced that political considerations had dominated and were dominating the trade and industry of Soviet Russia, and that there was no commercial policy at all.

At the head offices of the State tanning syndicate I was received not merely with friendliness, but even with some ceremony. The whole staff of this organization consisted of amateurs, as has been generally observed in all the Soviet organizations. The president of the board was a trusted member of the Communist Party, a very lively and talkative Jew named Erisman, who in a not very remote past had been a chemist. He received me in his study, and discoursed to me for an hour and a half on the brilliant future of nationalized industry.

The huge study, carpeted with Eastern rugs and sparingly, but luxuriously, furnished; my host himself, in his satin coat contained by a belt, his sham enthusiasm, and his Sovietic eloquence, made on me the impression of something temporary, unreal, with no firm foundation. I felt that even Erisman looked on himself and the organization of which he was head as a piece of play-acting, indispensable to the exigencies of the political situation.

On the occasion of this our first business interview we did not touch at all in our conversation on the contents of my agreement. Erisman said it was necessary to ask Moscow for instructions. Pending this, we should in the immediate future have to examine all the clauses of the agreement in principle, and for that purpose he, Erisman, had given instructions for a meeting of the board of the syndicate to be called.

"And now allow me to invite you to lunch," said Erisman, turning to me with an amiable smile. "You are in Soviet Russia

for the first time, and are forming some kind of impression of us."

We drove down the Nevsky Prospect to the Hôtel de l'Europe in an open Benz six-seater—Erisman and I and the adviser of the syndicate, Sventorzhensky, professor of technology. The hotel had kept its old name but, of course, had been nationalized.

In the large dining-room everything was almost as of old—only dirtier and more neglected. It was noticeable that the building had suffered severely during the years of revolution. The gilding was faded in places, the moulded decorations had collapsed, and the plaster was cracked. The waiters, in worn second-hand tail-coats, visibly endeavoured to create the illusion that all was as before, but vainly. At the tables sat the same variegated public I saw everywhere. A great number of ladies, brightly and crudely made up, in dresses whose fashionable cut was exaggerated to the point of unnaturalness; a multitude of young men, forming the majority of the guests, in grey, black, or brown coats, sometimes of velvet, contained by belts; foreigners in ordinary European suits, and representatives of the new Soviet *bourgeoisie*, the so-called "Nepmen"—the Soviet business men—attired with a crude fashionableness.

We sat down at one of the round side-tables, and my amiable host ordered luncheon and wine. The "professor", adviser to the syndicate, had probably been invited, as a person of "*bourgeois* origin", specially to converse with me. I shall never forget the almost imperceptible, sad irony with which this elderly, intelligent, highly educated man replied to the sallies of the talkative Erisman. Looking right into my eyes, the professor enlightened me as to the organization of the "harmonious system" of Soviet trade and industry, and expounded its indisputable advantages for us foreigners desiring to trade with the Soviet State.

The warmed Chambertin shone ruby red in the glasses. The muffled tones of a dreamy, sensuous melody were wafted from the orchestra, and, at the next table, a young man in a leather jacket was talking with intense eagerness to a lady with coral lips:

"Don't you be afraid of him! What does it matter if he is your

husband? I've only to wink an eye, and he'll be liquidated in half a minute. He ought to be thankful he's still alive, I tell you that!"

The thick, solid china dishes bore the old Imperial arms—the double-headed eagle. Heaven alone knows what an intricate curve Fate had had to draw to bring us all together—the Tchek-ist with his mistress, the old professor of technology, the chemist turned president of a syndicate, myself, and the plates from the Imperial Court—in the nationalized Hôtel de l'Europe!

CHAPTER III

A Priest's Story—The "Red Bishop"—Problem of Uncared-for Children—Juvenile Criminals—Home Life under the Soviets—Show and Reality

WHILE AWAITING THE CONFERENCE at the offices of the tanning syndicate which had been fixed for a week ahead, I was able to devote my enforced leisure to the observation and study of Soviet Petrograd.

According to information I had received, a number of my friends and acquaintances had so far been spared by the Tcheka terror and were dragging out the melancholy existence of "former" people, i.e. people of the old régime. But as I had not acquainted myself with the Soviet system of life, it seemed more sensible to postpone meetings with friends till a later date and for the present occupy myself with an outward survey of the city and its surroundings.

Just opposite our house the Nikolsky Cathedral rose into the sky from amid the dusty trees of the square. This had been the church of the naval units stationed in Petrograd. It had suffered a great deal, both outside and inside, during the years of revolution and ecclesiastical persecution.

There was a fairly large congregation at the Saturday evening service, almost all elderly people of the old régime. I had known one of the priests of the Cathedral long before the Revolution, and, noticing him at the evening service, I determined to go up to the altar and speak to him when it was over. The old priest was much astonished and delighted to see me, but his account of the events of the past few years was anything but cheerful. Two of his former colleagues had been shot in 1922 and a third sent to the Solovetsky concentration camp, on the islands in the White Sea. He himself had not been touched so far, but was dragging out a miserable existence of semi-starvation, under the hourly menace of sudden arrest. All the church treasures, including many objects of historic interest, had been confiscated by the Soviet Government, and the impoverished parishioners

were unable to provide the Cathedral clergy with the means of existence.

"Look how I go about," the old man said, pointing to his robe, patched with bits of material of different colours, and his boots all in holes. "The deacon's all right; he lends a hand at unloading barges, and sometimes sings in the chorus at the theatre. I'd have gone under altogether if it hadn't been for my wife and daughter. They both work in a textile factory."

A couple of days after this meeting with the old priest I was walking along the Nikolaevskaja Street with a fellow-countryman of mine, and passed the so-called Pavloff Hall, where stage celebrities visiting the city give performances and lectures of every possible kind are delivered. A very handsome and imposing priest, wearing a white silk robe and white silk cap, was just getting into a smart carriage standing by the steps, drawn by a pair of beautiful grey horses. Two well-dressed young women sat opposite him on the front seat. The carriage started, the horses moved off at once at a quick trot, and a flood of people poured down the main steps of the Pavloff Hall on to the pavement.

I could not help thinking of my friend the priest and his torn robe, and the deacon unloading timber barges. I imparted my thoughts to my companion, and he said:

"Well, you can hardly compare that priest's position with this mountebank's. The fellow we've just seen is the so-called 'Red Bishop' Vedensky, a supporter of the Soviet power, the defender and propagandist of the idea of the 'Living Church'. He is a brilliant speaker, and a cynical, unprincipled voluptuary, who believes neither in God nor the devil. The 'Living Church' is simply a disguise in which Communist propaganda and the defence of Soviet rule are dressed up for the benefit of those sections of the population which still cling to religion. You surely know the expression *po stolku, po skolku*?"¹ My companion laughed as he said this: "Well, the Living Church is religion *po stolku, po skolku*—as far as it is required by the exigencies of the

¹ "As far as is necessary", "up to a point".

political situation. Just like 'Nep'—that's trade *po stolku, po skolku*."

We came into the Ligovskaja Street. Gloomy, uneasy people passed us; occasionally a motor-car went by, containing young men in leather jackets, with soft sports caps on the backs of their heads. Dozens of children and half-grown boys and girls with boxes and trays were selling cigarettes, sweetmeats, and similar things on the pavements. Little girls of not more than ten or eleven, recognizing us at once by our clothes as profitable customers, ran up to us and, speaking rapidly, made us the most shameless proposals.

This was at the end of August 1923, in the central part of Communist Petrograd.

Petrograd, and still more Moscow, astonish the newly arrived foreigner by their swarms of hooligans and uncared-for children. In many public places in Soviet Russia placards are hung up bearing the words:

Children are the flowers of our life.

From time to time a sentimental, moving article, half *feuilleton* half appeal, is published in the Soviet papers under some such headline as the above, inviting people to subscribe to children's colonies and refuges. All this is humbug, pretty fancy, theory. As if people could possibly be expected to subscribe, when the whole population has been impoverished! There are many children who are uncared-for because they have no parents.

The colonies for juvenile offenders and the ordinary prisons are filled to the brim with young criminals. I myself, in Moscow and Petrograd, saw dozens of little girls engaged in prostitution in broad daylight, and continually saw small boys of twelve or thirteen taking cocaine.

I was returning from Tsarskoe Selo late one evening by the suburban railway. The compartment was crammed full of ragged boys of twelve or under, who conversed on sexual subjects with a frank cynicism. The guard, coming through the carriage, made a sign to me to leave the compartment, and suggested that I should move to another carriage.

"It's dirtier there, but it's safer," he said. "Those boys are a pack of ruffians; they wouldn't stop at murder. They all take cocaine."

I did not altogether believe what the old guard said, but this is what I read soon afterwards in a Soviet paper (the *Krasnaja Gazeta* of September 18, 1923):

The superintendent of the Fifth Children's Refuge, Zinovieff by name, was attacked yesterday, in the daytime, by several boys, inmates of the refuge, and subjected to torture. Knife wounds were inflicted. The superintendent died shortly afterwards. An inquiry is being made.

In the alleys of Petrograd and Moscow, child criminals in regular gangs fall upon any at all decently dressed woman and extort money from her by threatening to pour acids on her face or to bite her in order to infect her with venereal disease. A lady of my acquaintance was set upon at eleven o'clock one night near the Alexandrovsky market by a crowd of small girls and boys, who threatened to let loose typhus germs, specially preserved in a small box, on her fur coat. She ransomed herself for five roubles, and thought she had got off very lightly.

According to official statistics for the year 1925, there were nearly a million orphan children in Soviet Russia, maintained in 2,500 different refuges and homes. But these statistics tell us nothing of the children who, although they have parents, are left to themselves and return to their parents only to sleep, and that not always.

Owing to the peculiarities of the Soviet system of life, the majority of parents find it quite impossible to look after their children. Both husband and wife are on duty, or at work, from morning till evening. On their return from work they have to fetch wood, take their turn at the kitchen range, and cook the dinner. Then they have to hurry off to some election meeting, or to a lecture, or to the party school. Everything connected with Communist propaganda is obligatory for the Soviet workmen and employees. Failure to discharge party and public obligations is punished by dismissal. Moreover, thanks to the dictatorship of the Communist Party and the abnormal conditions of Soviet

life, there are many *déclassés* who have no definite occupation. These people make a living as best they can by means of casual labour, involving a prolonged absence from home. When to all this is added the fact that several families live in one flat—families of entirely different social position and educational level—it will be understood that there is a menacing increase in the numbers of uncared-for children, child criminals, their immature minds infected by the sin-laden atmosphere of a great city, demoralized by years of revolution, anarchy, and terror.

The measures taken by the Government itself amount for the most part to periodical police raids and the placing of the children arrested in corrective colonies.

Stifled as public initiative is in the Soviet State, it has nevertheless been able to organize a few children's homes, not for orphans, but specially for the so-called uncared-for children. But what do these few refuges signify in comparison with the hundreds of thousands of uncared-for adolescent criminals?

Two homes are specially maintained in Moscow and Petrograd to be exhibited to foreigners and delegations of all kinds. In them orphan (but not uncared-for) children are kept. The conditions in these homes are entirely satisfactory.

I was told by Professor B., who attended me when I was ill, and who was charged with the medical supervision of the homes for uncared-for children, that hardly any of the homes are properly equipped for their purpose. There are not even enough beds, and the children sleep two or three in one bed. Hence a vast quantity of trachomas and venereal cases.

Of 10,000 uncared-for children examined by a medical commission, about 1,500 were found to be abnormal, 400 epileptic, and 2,000 addicted to cocaine. The examination was conducted in Petrograd in 1924, during three months of the winter. These 10,000 children were a relatively small proportion of the uncared-for children of Petrograd. They were the least hardened young criminals, who feared the cold of winter and surrendered themselves almost voluntarily into the hands of the inspectors.

I have neither time, nor space, nor special knowledge to elucidate with due thoroughness the question I have touched on in the preceding pages. I have only noted the facts of which chance put me in possession. I think, however, that the little I have written sufficiently illustrates one of the sides of Soviet life and the real value of the flamboyant Soviet phraseology: "Children are the flowers of our life."

CHAPTER IV

Soviet Procrastination—My Office—Intermediaries in Business—Obstructive Regulations—Trade and Politics—How to Get an Import Licence—A Painful Experience

IT WAS AT THE FIRST "formal" conference at the offices of the tanning syndicate that I first became acquainted with Soviet business procedure. In the course of the three hours which the examination of the contract took, the fussy "Comrade" Erisman contrived to send off more than ten employees on errands to different departments of the syndicate. At the close of the proceedings the whole table, covered with red cloth, was heaped with mountains of statistical information of every possible kind—diagrams showing the output of the tanneries, and countless decrees, instructions, and so on.

The upshot of the whole proceedings was that it was absolutely necessary to ask for fresh information from the trusts and factories, as that in the possession of the syndicate was, in Comrade Erisman's opinion, insufficient. To use his own delightful phrase, he had not obtained a "monolithic" impression of the amount of tanning extract required by the syndicate *per mensem* and *per annum*.

My efforts to approach the question from a less scientific but more commercial point of view had no success whatever. The whole affair was postponed for a fortnight, pending the receipt of all the information which Erisman regarded as indispensable.

In taking leave of me, Erisman complained to me with much feeling of his excessive burden of work and his complete lack of reliable assistants. It seemed from his words that the whole tanning industry of Russia rested upon his feeble shoulders, and at the same time he was president of a number of party organizations.

As the whole affair was becoming more and more involved, and yet telegrams from South America requested that I should continue the negotiations and wait for a favourable issue, my

stay in Russia was prolonged for an indefinite period. I therefore took a small office in the house occupied by our Consulate in the Nevsky Prospect and determined to wait. As I had received commissions on behalf of English and Finnish firms, I decided to try to make some use of these while awaiting some definite decision regarding my main business.

In the organization of my office I was greatly helped by Mr. Koponen, who had been born in Russia and received his higher education there, and had lived in the country almost without a break. Koponen was a Finnish subject, and I had met him quite casually at our Consulate. A young man with an open, genial face, he at once impressed me most agreeably. As he was out of work and I needed a secretary and assistant who was acquainted with Soviet routine, Koponen entered my service after brief negotiations and my office began to function.

In the passage on the fifth floor, where our office was, there were several offices belonging to countrymen of ours. They were occupied with minor business matters of a casual nature, concerning the exchange of goods between Finland and Soviet Russia. As in Soviet Russia it was impossible to conclude any affair without the aid of intermediaries, the most heterogeneous crowd of people was always hanging about the passage and the staircase. Every kind of person figured in this crowd—Jews of all appearances and sizes, former officers, bank employees, officials, social lionesses, brokers from the Black Bourse, “Nepmen”, merchants and small shopkeepers.

Despite my reluctance to make use of the services of intermediaries, I quickly perceived that I could not do without them. A piece of business of the simplest and most legitimate nature, for the execution of which, in any civilized country, five minutes' conversation on the telephone would have sufficed, became, in the land of prohibition, regulation, and nationalization, a lengthy and complicated affair. It meant the beginning of endless correspondence, long hours of waiting in the ante-chambers of various organizations, and private “heart to heart” talks with Soviet officials, always at the risk of running into the

arms of an *agent provocateur* and being arrested for breaking some regulation.

Trade with private undertakings was for me entirely out of the question. Not one of them had the right even to make an application for the receipt of a licence to import goods of any kind from abroad.

A few private shops and small private wholesale businesses had the right to obtain goods from State organizations only.

By no means every Soviet State undertaking, even though it be comparatively large, has the right to receive an import licence. For example, such huge concerns as the Putiloff works, the tanning syndicate, and the central purchasing organization for all the co-operative stores in the North-Western Area none of them have the right to give direct orders abroad. All these undertakings have to order everything they require through special purchasing organizations in Moscow. These central organs, in their turn, are greatly impeded in their activities by the so-called Council of Labour and Defence (*Sto*),¹ and the Commissariat for Foreign Trade. This organization, in giving orders, is always guided by the exigencies of the political situation; it does not take the needs of industry or the demands of the population into account at all, but holds up orders and, in placing them, chooses the foreign market which best suits the requirements of the political situation at the moment.

The economic section of the Tcheka, which receives information from its agents abroad regarding the state of foreign public opinion, plays a dominating part in the distribution of even the smallest orders. The reason for this is that every purchase made abroad by organs of the Soviet Government is intended primarily to create rumours favourable to the Soviet Government in those States where, in view of the political situation at the moment, it is desirable that this should be done.

Occasionally some foreigner succeeds in obtaining a licence for the importation of goods of some kind for which there is a demand in the Russian market. But the obtaining of such licences always has a very disagreeable, not to say shady, side; it

¹ *Soviet Truda i Oborony.*

means some ingenious evasion of the law and, consequently, serious risk of falling into the clutches of the Tcheka.

The most ordinary method of obtaining a licence is this: you must seek out some thoroughly proletarian organization, such as a workmen's or peasants' co-operative association, or even a Tcheka co-operative association, and then find out just what article this organization is in need of at the moment. As all Soviet undertakings without exception need goods and have no ready money, the board always consents willingly to buy goods on credit, and undertakes to apply for an import licence. To make things safer, the lowest possible figure is named in the contract, sometimes even one which would obviously mean a loss to the seller. When the licence has been procured, it is sent along with the contract to the Soviet trade delegation in the country from which the goods are to be sent. On account of the abnormally low price named, the trade delegation cannot protest against the deal, for if it did so it would itself be obliged to buy the goods at an equally low price.

When the consignee receives the goods, then, according to an agreement made in advance between the seller and influential members of the board, a considerable part of the goods is rejected, very often half or two-thirds of the whole quantity, and the seller has the rejected goods returned to him. He then sells his goods to private shops and speculators at a price which repays with interest the expenses of his cunning manipulation.

Owing to the monopoly of foreign trade, there is always a goods famine in the Soviet market, and owing to the enormous additional expenses which the State trade organizations have to bear, economic competition with them is not a thing to be dreaded.

As an example of what happens, I can give the following case, in which I personally was concerned. I somehow succeeded, with great trouble, in obtaining, quite legally, through a large State organization, a permit to import a comparatively small quantity of a certain article of which two Petrograd factories stood in urgent need. They despaired of obtaining the goods through their syndicate, although they had applied for them

several months before. The syndicate hung the matter up, and the situation had become so acute that the factories might have to close down at any moment. I learned of the stoppage of production quite accidentally through certain connections of mine, and on the advice of a "Nepman", who was an expert in such matters, I purchased a quantity of the article required in Finland. Pending the receipt from the syndicate of the material indispensable for the maintenance of production, it was decided to give me a small order on a three months' credit basis. In return, I stipulated that I should have the right to dispose as I pleased of one-fourth of the goods supplied.

When the goods arrived and were delivered to the factory, I proceeded to sell the portion which was at my own disposal. Despite the fact that I was selling my goods at a profit of 100 per cent., I cleared the whole stock almost instantaneously. A short time afterwards I met one of the engineers from the factory and asked him at what price the factory had received the part of the consignment which according to the contract I had handed over direct to the syndicate. To my astonishment and vexation I learnt that the syndicate had imposed additional charges on the goods amounting to 150 per cent., which meant that I could have sold the goods at my disposal at a considerably higher price than I had actually obtained.

CHAPTER V

*Origins of "Nep"—A Breathing-space—Stabilizing the Tcher-
vonets—Hopes of Business Revival—Disillusionment—Tcheka's
Activities Extended—How "Former" People Live—Mass Demon-
strations*

EVEN WHEN COMPLETE economic chaos prevailed, and a clique of fanatics and megalomaniacs were carrying out the wildest experiments at the country's expense for the glory of the world revolution, it was impossible to forget that a nation of 150,000,000 people demands some minimum of satisfaction if it is to maintain its existence. If a nation, however passive, unexacting, and submissive it may be, is deprived of that minimum without which even a semi-civilized existence is unthinkable, that nation will collapse. It is perfectly natural that 150,000,000 people, occupying an area equal to one-sixth of the globe, should be unable to disappear from the face of the earth, or revert to the condition of primeval savages, without uttering some protest.

It was for this reason that the era of so-called militant Communism, having brought the country almost to the point at which people begin to revert to a primitive state of existence, was replaced by the era of State capitalism. This transition to the "new economic policy" enabled its creators, the members of the Communist International, to strengthen their positions. They obtained that breathing-space which they urgently needed while awaiting the arrival of the world proletarian revolution, which seemed to the Red leaders somewhat overdue.

The policy of State capitalism created a new system of life and required money—a great deal of money. Moreover, the reviving life of the nation demanded cultural forces for its service.

Thanks to the monopoly of foreign trade, the Soviet Government succeeded for a time in stabilizing its money unit, the *tchervonets*, in the home market. A State fund was created by applying the system of taxation in kind to the rural population

on a broad basis, by confiscating the treasures of the churches and palaces, private capital, valuables, and real property. Systematic police raids, imprisonment, exile, and shootings helped to strengthen the *tchervonets*, despite the capricious manner in which the right to issue notes was extended.

The Bolsheviks succeeded in getting into working order some of the half-ruined factories and works which had suffered the least, and in completing their equipment at the expense of those factories which it was impossible to restore.

All this work was done at the price, in the literal sense of the word, of many tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of human lives. People died of exhaustion, and were shot in thousands at the slightest manifestation of discontent—for example, when, at the inception of the financial reform, the workmen were paid in money that had no value and miserable food rations.

The expeditionary detachments of the Tcheika ravaged the country to enable the Government to supply the half-starved workmen with their meagre rations. In exchange for the corn, flax, wool, and timber which it took from the peasants and exported to foreign countries, the Soviet Government received the minimum of goods necessary to produce the mirage of an awakening industry.

Mills and factories earned money; the railways were got into some kind of order. The rural population, which had patiently endured years of chaos and anarchy, began to receive from the towns wretched manufactured goods, primitive tools, and agricultural instruments. The towns began to revive. The dead were silent, but the survivors looked to "Nep" with hopes of further development and an improvement in the conditions of life.

Attracted by the bait of "Nep", business men, traders, and intellectuals who had been spared by the terror during the period of militant Communism, crept out of their holes. The apparent possibilities of "Nep" aroused in some hopes of enrichment, in others of suitable work. The hidden gold and valuables were gradually restored to God's daylight. Foreign

merchants, contractors, and even financiers made their appearance, drawn to Russia by the new prospects, the reawakening life of the mighty State. The Government decree making concessions and "mixed State companies"¹ permissible led to the establishment of a few banks and other undertakings which had the appearance of being purely private enterprises.

But disillusionment quickly set in, and the faces of those optimists who had seen in "Nep" a sign of evolution and retreat from the Communist positions began to grow longer and longer. The so-called dictatorship of the proletariat remained unshaken, and the Tcheka, reformed under the title of State Political Direction (G.P.U.),² and extended and perfected to an incredible degree, remained the old Tcheka with wider powers than ever.

The treacherous "Nep" not only recalled to life the survivors of the old *intelligentsia*, but created a new, half-baked "Red" *intelligentsia*, sprung from the ranks of the proletarian and peasant masses. This new *intelligentsia* is very quickly acquiring *bourgeois* habits and tastes, and step by step abandoning the so-called proletarian ideology. Thanks to "Nep", foreign merchants and concession-hunters appeared in the territory of the Soviet Republic and came into contact with its inhabitants. Life issued from the narrow bounds set to it by militant Communism, still in the memory of all, and continually developed new sides.

Thus the activities of the Tcheka became every moment more multifarious and elaborate, till they embraced the tiniest manifestations of life in the remotest corners of the Soviet State.

The Tcheka is everywhere. It is in the schools, the factories, the party organizations, in all works and businesses, in the police, in the army, on the railways. Even the People's Commissaries are kept under the observation of the Tcheka. The Tcheka is even in the home; for owing to the great number of ruined and collapsing houses, almost every flat is inhabited

¹ Companies financed partly by the State, partly by private capital.

² *Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie*.

by several families, and there are always several secret agents of the Tcheka to every house.

All houses are nationalized and managed by house committees formed from among the inhabitants. The house committee must contain at least one reliable Communist. If there is not one among the inhabitants, the local secret agent of the Tcheka immediately informs the branch responsible, and a reliable Communist is installed in the house by the district committee. If, at the house committee elections, this Communist is not elected, the matter is immediately reported to the district committee, and new elections are held with a previously drawn-up list of candidates under the control of the Tcheka and district committee.

All elections in Soviet Russia are carried out by open voting (raising the hand). First the list of candidates is read aloud. Then the question is put: "Who is for?" Then follows the malicious question: "Who is against?" It should be added that there never is any "against" anywhere, for every child in Soviet Russia knows that there are Tchekists in the election-room, and that the raising of a hand "against" might mean at least departure to a "free settlement" in Siberia.

People, however, always and everywhere adapt themselves to circumstances in the long run, and Soviet citizens are no exceptions in that respect. For example, I went to see some old acquaintances of mine who in the old pre-Revolution days had lived in one of the most fashionable streets. I met Mr. B. by chance in the Nevsky Prospect, and I should never have recognized in that dirty, ragged tramp the once smartly dressed chairman of many joint-stock companies. It was he who addressed me, but he evidently remembered that I was a foreigner, for he stopped short, hurriedly whispered to me his old address, and added: "The back staircase; my name's written on a door in chalk: you'll see for yourself."

The house where B. lived was immense, with a smart front entrance, of course shut. I ascended to the fourth floor by the back staircase and found, as I had been told, a white-marked door. After repeated knocks and a prolonged survey of myself

by two pairs of eyes through the crack of the door, I was admitted. I found that B. was living in his son's old bachelor quarters, in the same house where they had had a very large flat. Six people lived in the son's flat, consisting of three rooms, a kitchen, and a bathroom—B. and his wife, their grown-up daughter, their son, an old ex-valet of B.'s, and the valet's adopted daughter, a girl of fifteen. The whole population of the flat—"Noah's Ark", as B. called it—was assembled.

"As you see," B. began, "we're not badly off. We've all got work, and they can't quarter another soul on us—the whole square's full. I'm a book-keeper at the Stevedores' Union, and this old ruffian" (indicating his former trusty servant with a nod), "thanks to his proletarian origin, has a fine job—he's an usher at the X. Theatre. The cunning old brute gets us all free tickets twice a month."¹

The "cunning old brute" smiled good-humouredly and returned to his task of washing the kitchen floor, which my arrival had interrupted.

At tea I heard from all the members of "Noah's Ark" every detail of their lives during the past years of the Revolution. When the supreme power passed into the hands of the Bolsheviks, the whole B. family wisely took refuge at a small dairy belonging to the valet's brother, and the valet himself took up his quarters in the bachelor flat of B.'s son, who was an engineer in one of the big Petrograd factories. To secure himself against invasion by unwanted lodgers, the engineer enrolled himself as a member of the "Inventors' Union" (this "union" still exists) and set up in his flat some kind of a laboratory, which he registered as "the Proletarian Research Laboratory, the Red Marat". In the dawn of militant Communism nonsense of this kind achieved its purpose, and he and his "assistant", his father's valet, cooked horse-flesh and porridge on an oil stove, made metal lighters to be exchanged for food, and stole wood for heating from barges and old fences.

¹ For reasons which will be easily understood, I have changed the initial letter of my acquaintance's name, and have also given fictitious names or initials to the places of employment mentioned.

When "Nep" made its appearance, the whole family returned to Petrograd and one by one secured employment, which, while not yielding enough to keep them, gave them the right to exist and reduced the rent of their flat. All six worked hard, at a joint average wage of 160 roubles a month. The engineer earned most, getting 80 roubles (about £7) a month. As the occupants were at work, the rent of the flat was only 30 roubles a month. Mrs. B. and her daughter had some hidden jewels, and the cautious and gradual realization of these relics of "former grandeur" enabled the family to live.

The day before my visit, as it happened, the so-called October celebrations, on the occasion of the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, had been held. This anniversary is always celebrated with huge demonstrations, meetings, gala performances, and a military parade.

The whole family, of course, took part in these demonstrations, each in accordance with the nature of his or her employment. Worthy Mr. B. even carried a placard bearing the inscription, "Death to the international *bourgeoisie*!"

Mass demonstrations in Soviet Russia are organized in the following manner. A long time before the day fixed for the celebrations, the local party committee, in accordance with instructions received from Moscow, issues to all the district committees detailed orders regarding the arrangement and organization of the demonstration. The district committees in their turn give instructions to the Communist groups in the various organizations, factories, works, and other Soviet undertakings. There is no organization, however small, in which a so-called Communist cell does not exist. Thanks to this system, on the day fixed for the procession literally the whole population of Soviet Russia, in the towns, villages, and country hamlets, marches past carrying placards and singing the International. It is quite impossible to abstain from taking part in these demonstrations, for all employees and workmen have their names checked off by members of the Communist cells in their own offices and factories when the procession forms up at the assembly point. Moreover, there are always

some secret agents of the Tcheka among the personnel of every Soviet organization.

Not to take part in a demonstration exposes a man to the risk of dismissal from his post, and that, for a Soviet citizen, means the loss of those few human rights to existence which employment gives, despite the beggarly remuneration and the numerous obligations it involves.

I was preparing to leave my kind hosts. The old valet was just going to his work at the theatre, while the engineer and his sister were hurrying off to their organizations for some kind of obligatory reports or elections.

"Wait half a minute, my dear fellow," B. said to me. "Let Pastenka" (the valet's adopted daughter) "go down with them and see that there's no one watching near the house. One soon gets into trouble if one has anything to do with foreigners. You're so well turned out."

Pastenka came back in a minute and reported that the coast was clear.

Thus do "people of the old régime" live in Soviet Russia.

CHAPTER VI

At the Opera—A Soviet Audience—Supper at the Donon—My New Friend, Levinson—Early Morning in Petrograd—A "Nepman" at Home—Business under Difficulties—Soviet Negotiations in South America

ONE EVENING, at a performance of the opera *Boris Godunoff* (a jubilee performance in honour of the veteran singer Andreeff), I ran up against my Dutch fellow-traveller of some time before in the corridor between the acts. I expressed my dissatisfaction with the turn things were taking, and complained of the deadly slowness and red tape of the Soviet organizations. My friend led me to one of the entrances to the lighted theatre and, pointing to some boxes containing men in evening dress, said:

"All those men are foreign business men—your colleagues and mine. I know nearly all of them. If you'd like to bet, I'll lay you a champagne supper at the Donon that the luckiest and cleverest of them hasn't got any definite decision about his business under a year of waiting and worrying. Most of them are doing little odd jobs here and there in the hope of things changing for the better."

"Sometimes", the Dutchman continued, "one of us succeeds in bringing off a big deal, thanks to some lucky coincidence and the political situation at the moment. Then all the others revive; each thinks his turn is coming. I did one big stroke of business, worse luck; it happened just at the moment when the Bolsheviks wanted Holland to recognize them. And now my principals keep me here in this hole in the hope of my bringing off more profitable deals, confound it!"

"The other day that black Frenchman there bought a huge consignment of flax from the Soviet Government on very favourable terms. He's been here ten months. We and the Germans were willing to give a much better price than the Frenchman, but France is all the fashion just now."

Of course I did not take the Dutchman's bet, but neverthe-

less we decided to have supper at the Donon after the performance, with a few other people.

The former Imperial Mariinsky Theatre, called in Soviet language the "National Theatre for the Opera and Ballet", has suffered comparatively little under the Soviet régime. It is dirtier than it used to be, the gilding has worn off, the gorgeous curtains of the boxes are dilapidated, and the emblems of Soviet rule, the sickle and hammer, are embroidered on them in place of the former double-headed eagle. But in general, as compared with everything else I saw in Soviet Russia, the theatre made an impression of smartness, and even of dignity, if one kept one's eyes off the audience.

As in the case in all public places in Soviet Russia, a theatre audience makes the impression of a dingy, poorly clad crowd of oppressed people. In the stalls were a number of excessively made-up ladies; Jewish and Oriental faces were in the majority. In the circle and gallery typical Russian faces, with projecting cheekbones, were to be seen. The boxes and front rows of the stalls were occupied entirely by foreigners and "Nepmen". In the corridors and the foyer, among the dingy crowd of working-class people, I noticed a few intellectual Russian faces, whose owners were evidently "former" people who had managed to survive. This was perceptible from the modest smartness of the ladies' remade dresses and the old-fashioned, but clean, suits worn by the men.

The opera was magnificently rendered, and the staging was astonishingly artistic.

At the close of the performance honours were done to the veteran singer. Speeches were delivered by the representatives of every proletarian organization imaginable. The International was played almost uninterruptedly, and all the speeches, of course composed at the offices of the district committees, laid stress on the idea that art must be exclusively proletarian, and must serve the interests of the proletariat.

The Dutchman and I did not stay till the end of the ceremony, but went to the Donon. This is an old and fashionable restaurant, which revived with the coming of "Nep". It was

opened by a group of private individuals, who leased it on very favourable terms. The secret of the privileges secured by the lessees is very simple: the existence of the restaurant suited the purpose of the Tcheka, for there assembled only an "exclusive public", foreigners and "Nepmen"—in other words, just those elements which above all others attracted the attention of the Tcheka.

Everything in this trap was in the style of the old régime: a splendid Roumanian string orchestra, highly trained, perfectly turned-out waiters, excellent wine, and exquisite cooking. The two rooms, separated by a row of arches, were filled with a smart crowd. Champagne flowed in rivers, and a cabaret performance was given without interruption by artists from the opera and the ballet, who sang and danced on the floor of the restaurant among the tables.

We occupied a private room, with an open balcony looking on to the public restaurant. At my request the Dutchman had included among his guests a "Nepman" whom "trustworthy people" had long before indicated to me as a man who had the *entrée* into Soviet business circles. This Jew, formerly a solicitor, had succeeded in making a large fortune since the introduction of "Nep". He was very intimate with the Commissary for Foreign Trade, Krassin, and the director of the State Trade Organization, Lezhava. I will give this "Nepman" the fictitious name of Levinson. His "civil wife", the well-known opera singer, Madame X., was also of our party, brilliant in dazzling diamonds and a dress just received from Paris.

Our supper-party lasted till six in the morning, and was a great success in every respect. Under cover of the noise I succeeded in having a good talk with Levinson about my business, and assured myself of his support with the State trade chieftains in Moscow.

My trip to Moscow was to take place in the middle of November, and pending that, by the way as it were, Levinson suggested to me a very profitable scheme. This was as follows. Our firm was to supply a certain quantity of goods for the use of one of the State organizations. One-half of the total

consignment was to be in such a condition that the consignee would be able to reject it.

I knew Soviet conditions well enough by now to be able to understand Levinson at once. But the scheme he proposed did not suit me at all, for even the all-powerful Levinson might sooner or later find himself in the clutches of the Tcheka. Not wishing to injure the relations I had established with a useful man, I did not definitely refuse, and agreed with Levinson that I should go and see him at his flat and go into the whole matter in detail. It was interesting to note that Levinson would on no account consent to come and see me at my office, as owing to his connections with the Soviet magnates he was under the observation of the Tcheka.

At six o'clock in the morning the rooms were still half full of people. The ballet-dancer Orloff was skilfully dancing an American dance on one of the tables, among the glasses, while an Englishman was juggling with bottles with the pretty dancer K. perched on his shoulder.

In the misty half-light of the Petrograd autumn morning I walked along the still sleeping streets of the sphinx city, the city of contrasts and mirages. On the General Staff Square, now Uritsky Square, the mass of the Winter Palace, now bearing the inscription "Revolutionary Museum", loomed up. A large wooden tribune temporarily erected in the square was draped with red material. A newspaper vendor had already taken up his stand by the Column of Glory, and on his tray lay the *Pravda*, *Bezbozhnik*, and *Krasnaja Zvezda*. The figure of an angel at the summit of the column seemed to be about to drop her laurel wreath to the ground and float away into the grey space of sky.

A half-squadron of mounted militiamen hurried by at a brisk trot. Surely a piece of trickery, of word-play! The typical soldiers' faces, the figures, the whole bearing, were exactly as in old times. They were an almost exact copy of the old pre-Revolution police. The sole outward difference between them and the old police consisted in the straight-brimmed caps and the red braid on the overcoat collars.

On the Guard Cavalry Boulevard two militiamen were dragging a ragged, drunken loafer along by the collar. He sang the International as he went, evidently in order to justify himself in their eyes. That drunken man singing the International seemed to me to embody the whole being of the Soviet proletariat to-day—dragged along with a policeman's hand on its collar!

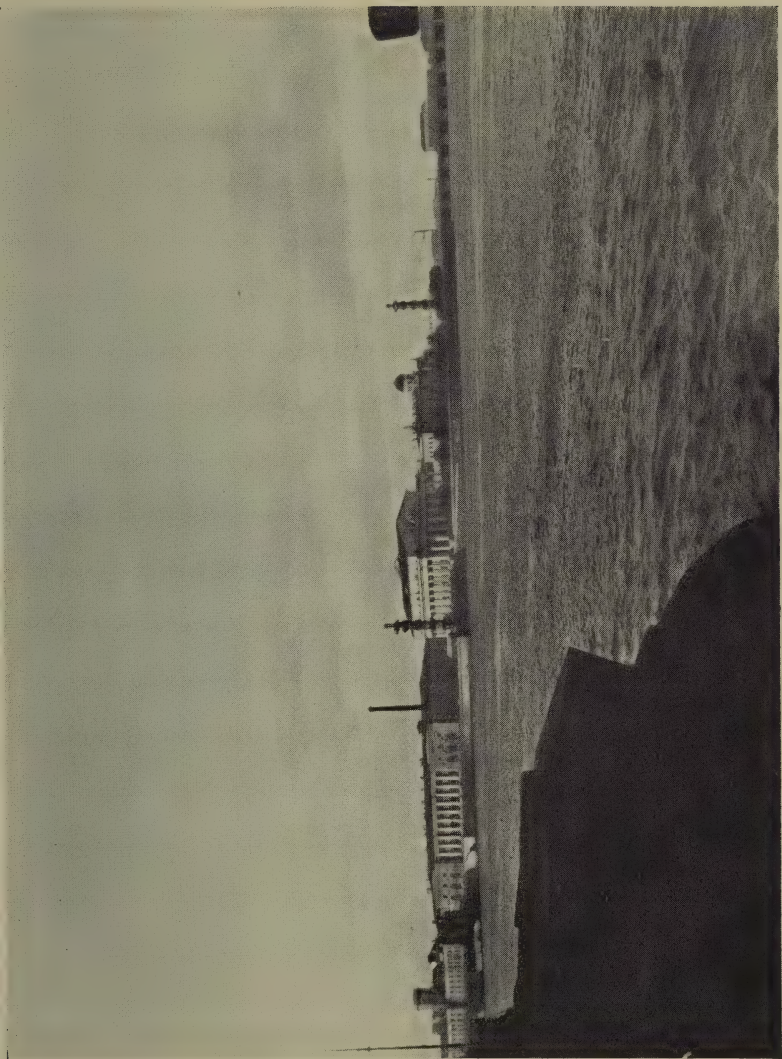
Levinson had two flats, and at his direction and invitation I went to that where the singer Madame X. lived. The flat was in one of the streets which had once been fashionable, and consisted of eight very large rooms, furnished with the most refined luxury. Antique furniture, a quantity of pictures, old Eastern rugs everywhere. This flat and the beautiful things that filled it were, needless to say, the result of the astute and fruitful activities of Levinson himself, who had been able to discover, as Madame X. acutely expressed it, "the central nerve" of the proletarian revolution.

"Oh, Abram Solomonovitch is a man of genius," she said to me with pride. "Only think, Abram Solomonovitch has absolutely no politics, but they all think so much of him! He has actually been arrested four times, but his influential friends always get him out."

Madame X. did not mention to me that she herself was also an influential person, but that, unfortunately, I found out a long time after this meeting. She was a secret agent of the Tcheka, and thanks to her intimate relations with Levinson, the Tcheka turned a blind eye to many of the "business genius'" schemes.

I came to a definite agreement with Levinson which would enable him to receive the quantity of goods he required through our firm's agency in one of the States bordering on Russia. I personally had no part at all in the scheme, but left Levinson to act at his own risk.

As the goods were to be paid for on their arrival in Soviet territory, the question of a financial guarantee caused some



THE BOURSE, PETROGRAD, SEEN FROM SOUTH BANK OF NEVA

uncertainty. However great a "genius" Levinson might be, I would not and could not make myself responsible to our firm's agency for the security of the goods and for punctual payment, seeing that the goods were not even being consigned to my address. But at last this delicate question too was settled, and I sent our agency all the guarantees required by a safe and private channel.

A fortnight later I received two letters from Levinson opening the door to the "centre" for me. It was agreed between me and Levinson that, when circumstances demanded, he should come to Moscow and help me to push the matter through.

The business of my private office had extended beyond all expectations. The mass of correspondence, and the crowds of intermediaries who flew about the city at my direction, threatened to swallow up my secretary and myself. A good deal of this business, of course, came to nothing, for some circumstance frequently revealed itself which fundamentally changed all my plans and calculations. Sometimes one of our intermediaries would disappear into the arms of the Tcheka without leaving a trace, and when this occurred that divine philosopher Koponen used to remark:

"Peace to his ashes. Anyhow, we've nothing to do with it. It doesn't matter, new ones will turn up soon."

New ones did turn up, with new proposals and new plans.

Sometimes a whole business deal was frustrated by the whole staff of the organization we were negotiating with being arrested—in other words, our customer disappeared from the face of the earth.

As I had made it a rule to conform strictly to the decrees in force in the Soviet State, I would not enter into any schemes, however alluring, if anything illegal were involved. I was, therefore, entirely free from anxiety regarding Koponen and myself, though I deeply regretted the frequent arrests of our customers and intermediaries.

The whole contract with the tanning syndicate was to be redrafted. When, after endless negotiations, communications,

and correspondence, the new contract was finally drawn up, it appeared that the syndicate had not the right to import goods direct from abroad. This right was withdrawn from the syndicate just at the moment when our negotiations were concluded. "Comrade" Erisman was flying backwards and forwards the whole time between Moscow and Petrograd, endeavouring to restore its lost rights to the organization under his command.

Letters addressed to me from South America were sent on to me from Helsingfors through our Consulate. I learnt from these letters that the Bolsheviki were conducting strenuous negotiations in the State where the head office and works of our firm were, in order to secure the *de jure* recognition of the Soviet Government, and it was rumoured that a Soviet trade delegation was to be installed there, and that huge purchases of raw material for the requirements of Soviet industry were being proposed.

If subsequent events had confirmed the news sent me, it might have had a decisive and favourable influence on the outcome of my affair. I was, therefore, not perturbed by my failure with the tanning syndicate, and based my hopes on my negotiations in Moscow and on the main factor in commercial dealings with Russia—Time.

CHAPTER VII

A New Contretemps—Unattractive Proposals—Industrial Camouflage—Real Experts Paralysed—The Policy of Concessions—Approaching Collapse of Trade and Industry—The Only Way Out

I WAS RUNG UP on the telephone one day at my office, and an unknown voice inquired: "Can I speak to Mr. Cederholm?" On my replying in the affirmative, the voice said: "The president of the *Sevzapgostorg*" (State Trade Syndicate for the North-Western Area), "Comrade Landa, will speak to you in a moment."

The Soviet "boss" in question expressed a wish to make my personal acquaintance, and asked me to fix a time at which it would be convenient for me to come to the organization of which he was head.

I went next day at the hour fixed and was received by Comrade Landa in his study. Choice furniture, rugs, and a mass of diagrams on the walls—everything as it always is in a Soviet "boss's" room. Comrade Landa himself was a thick-set, red-headed Jew, with a strong Jewish accent and a Europeanized exterior; he wore a decent lounge suit and a collar and tie.

It appeared from the conversation which followed that Comrade Landa had heard of the negotiations I was conducting, and, being at a session of the Supreme Economic Council in Moscow, had there put forward *his* scheme for supplying the tanning industry of the North-Western Area. He had succeeded in persuading "exalted circles" that the right to import raw material for tanning ought to be removed from the purview of the tanning syndicate, seeing that that syndicate was in any case able to trade in leather and footwear, while the *Sevzapgostorg* needed support and the trade in tanning materials would greatly increase its turnover.

I was boiling with rage inwardly at the thought that I had been obliged to start the whole thing again from the beginning on account of Landa's selfish attitude. But I had to control

myself, for my trip to Moscow lay ahead of me, where I hoped to carry my business through, with the help of the "genius" Levinson, over the heads of Landa and the talkative Erisman. I pretended to take an interest in Landa's proposal, and consented to go into the matter at a series of meetings to be arranged by Landa.

The first thing explained to me at these meetings was that the *Sevzapgostorg* had no ready money, and it was proposed that I should sell it consignments of goods on a six months' credit basis on no more secure guarantee than a bill given by the *Sevzapgostorg*. The business, in fact, would have to be arranged as follows. The *Sevzapgostorg* would sell my goods on credit to all the State tanneries in the North-Western Area. The tanneries would manufacture leather and footwear and sell their whole output to the trusts, also on credit; and the latter in their turn would distribute the goods among the retail shops and co-operative stores in the towns and countryside, also on credit. When, after months had passed, money was forthcoming from the retailers and, by a long and circuitous route, reached the *Sevzapgostorg*, I might hope to receive payment.

I had by this time seen quite enough of Soviet trade and general conditions to be unwilling to run the risk of putting my firm in the position of a creditor of Soviet industry. Despite the fact that the trusts, syndicates, and factories belong to the Government, the Soviet banks will hardly ever discount bills given by these organizations; for the banks too suffer from a chronic lack of money, and the trusts and syndicates, notwithstanding their "national" status, all work at a heavy loss and are always in debt. However submissive the town populations and the peasants may be, the Government cannot raise the prices of goods indefinitely, for even as it is the public, especially in the country, is obliged to buy its goods at incredibly high prices. The sham Soviet industry is saved only by the absence of competition with the foreign market, thanks to the State monopoly of foreign trade.

The whole Soviet industry is a pasteboard doll, moving its

limbs jerkily by means of strings pulled by the "centre". All industry in Russia to-day is as lifeless as a pasteboard toy.

On various plausible pretexts I visited several of the largest works in Petrograd, Moscow, and the Ivano-Vosnesensk area, the most highly industrialized region in all Russia. What was I shown? "Lenin's Red centres", co-operative stores, and a technical office where a number of people were doing accounts, drawing diagrams, drafting schemes, and so on. At one of the factories a whole group of engineers were working out a scheme for an underground railway in Petrograd—a city in which houses are collapsing for lack of funds for the renewal of the old wood drainage system, and where working-class families of five dwell in sixteen square yards of dingy, stuffy room-space. The men who were drawing up the underground railway scheme showed me with naïve pride a sketch of the façade of "a home of rest for men at work on the underground railway" and a coloured design for "garden homes" for the workers.

What did I see? I saw the out-of-date equipment of the factories; ancient, temporarily repaired machinery and workshops, burdened with such monstrous charges that the factories continually have to be asking for supplementary credits. The production of the factories is regulated in the most hand-to-mouth, amateurish manner conceivable, and it often happens that a change of management means new views and new experiments.

In some of the factories genuine engineers are the technical directors, but their activities are paralysed by members of the board who completely lack the training required for such a position—workmen, sometimes very clever and well-educated, but absolutely incompetent to manage a great technical concern.

The State monopoly of foreign trade cannot be openly modified in any way, even in the smallest degree, for this would be contrary to the fundamental axioms of the Communist party programme. Even the slightest relaxation of the monopoly would lead to contact with the West—in other words, would bring about the complete collapse of State industry. The Soviet Government, therefore, faced with the task of bringing foreign

capital into the country and satisfying the growing hunger for goods, came to a compromise decision. Some of the factories and works that were in the greatest straits were handed over to foreign contractors for a term of ten or fifteen years, the latter having the right as *concessionnaires* to order from abroad all the raw material required for production purposes. Thanks to the inordinately high prices charged for articles produced by the State, some *concessionnaires* are working successfully, keeping their prices on a level with those charged by the State, but giving better goods for the money. But all these concessions are very small, for the big foreign industrialists will not run the risk of putting large capital sums into Soviet undertakings. The whole existence of concessions is based upon the principle of *po stolku, po skolku* ("as far as is necessary"), and has no security beyond an agreement—with the Soviet authorities. The hopes placed in the *concessionnaires* by the Soviet Government have not been justified, for even the largest of them have created nothing solid or lasting; they order the machinery needed to keep the works going from abroad, and regard the business as something out of which they have to make as much money as possible in the shortest possible time, while the conditions in the isolated Soviet market allow it.

The whole trade and industry of the Soviet Government is marching with sure steps to a total collapse, and the purchasing power of the stabilized *tchervonets* is slowly sinking, ultimately to fall with a crash. Doubtless a quantity of palliative measures of every possible kind will be introduced one by one, half-measures, but these will not save the situation; gigantic sums are needed to re-equip the factories and raise their productive capacity. If this is not done, in a few years things will come to the pass they were at before the introduction of "Nep", and the most appalling anarchy will follow, unexampled in the world's history. The moral is that the present Soviet Government and its creator, the Communist International, are moving in a vicious circle, from which there is only one way out: they must abandon the monopoly of foreign trade and create proper legal conditions which will guarantee foreign capitalists both

their own personal safety and that of the capital they have invested in Soviet enterprises.

If this happens, the Communist International and the Tcheke will cease to exist as they are to-day; and it is therefore perfectly clear that so sharp a reversal of policy will be preceded by an era in which the Tcheke and Komintern will employ the whole armoury of atrocities and half-measures contained in their arsenal.

CHAPTER VIII

Visits to Moscow—Krassin Promises Help—Tanning Trust Scandal—Negotiations at an End—A Wave of Arrests—Rumours of Mass Executions—My Advance Guard

IN ORDER TO MAKE my future customers acquainted with the qualities of the standard type of our extract, I proposed to the *Sevzapgostorg* that I should immediately supply it with about a hundred tons at manufacturing price, amounting to about £2,000 sterling, of course cash down. My proposal could not have been more timely; for, as usual, one of the tanneries of the Petrograd trust was in difficulties, not having received from its syndicate the raw material it had long been demanding.

In selling the goods at manufacturing price I did not expect any direct personal profit; I only calculated that this small supply would bring me into closer contact with the factories, and that on the pretext of handing over the goods and gaining experience I should become more intimately acquainted with the state of the Soviet tanning industry and its requirements. This was one of the first points in the instructions I had received from my firm.

Not wishing to injure my relations with "Comrade" Landa or with "Comrade" Erisman, I went to Moscow, and there, at the Commissariat for Foreign Trade, I succeeded in so arranging the whole business that the tanning syndicate was given the right to import a sample consignment of goods. Thus, thanks to my mediation, this organization obtained a precedent for the restoration of its lost right to import direct from abroad, which greatly facilitated my task.

Our goods were stored in Germany, but they arrived in Petrograd fairly soon, and I was punctually paid at the offices of the syndicate.

"Comrade" Landa hurled thunder and lightning at the syndicate and its director, and continued to conduct negotiations with me with a thousand variations of every possible kind,

At the end of November I paid a second visit to Moscow and was received both by Lezhava, Director of the Trade Commissariat, and by Krassin himself. Whereas the first named showed himself to be a narrow-minded, stupid bureaucrat, Krassin understood my business from end to end in a moment, and promised to help me, considering that my firm's proposals were in complete accordance with the interests of Soviet industry. Unfortunately Krassin left for Paris and London the day after our meeting, and although he agreed in principle that our firm should supply the syndicate direct, he put off the final examination of the question and the signature of the contract until his return from abroad; that is, for three weeks. I nevertheless succeeded in obtaining from him a letter to the board of the syndicate which was bound to make it easier for me to defend my original contract as at first drafted.

About Christmas, the unexpected news was spread in Petrograd that the whole tanning trust and the whole board of the tanning syndicate had been arrested by the Tcheka in consequence of the discovery of extensive defalcations, corruption, and extravagance. The number of persons arrested was over four hundred, for the Tcheka, as its custom is, arrested not only the Soviet officials who had been privy to the scandal, but their relations, friends, and acquaintances as well.

The "genius" Levinson, whom I met at one of the banks, was much perturbed. "Only think!" he said to me in tragic tones, "a scandal like this in a Socialist republic, and at a time when the workers themselves are at the head of affairs everywhere!"

These words were insincere, for Levinson knew even better than I did that financial scandals had become the most normal occurrences in Soviet Russia (more so than in other countries), and that dozens of employees were arrested daily in one Soviet undertaking or another for offences committed by them or instigated by *agents provocateurs* of the Tcheka.

It is not without interest to note, as characteristic of official life in Soviet Russia, that "Comrade" Landa had actively

promoted the investigation and arrests at the tanning syndicate's headquarters, hoping to destroy his enemy and rival "Comrade" Erisman. Although the latter was not arrested, what had happened had put the whole syndicate out of action, and of course there could now, for me, be no question of any negotiations. When I went to Moscow for a third time after Christmas to see Krassin, he told me that until all the trouble was over, and the work of the syndicate was in order again, no definite negotiations were conceivable.

Thus I was compelled by force of circumstances to return to my private business. I must wait till everything was going normally again at the offices of the syndicate.

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At the end of January 1924 an epidemic of arrests on charges of espionage and "counter-revolution" broke out. The passages of our house in the Nevsky Prospect were quite empty, for even the intermediaries and commission-hunters were in a panic, and would have gone a mile out of their way to avoid any foreign office.

We all lost our Russian friends and acquaintances as though at the wave of a magic wand. This had happened before from time to time, but now the Tcheka, for some reason, raged unceasingly. It was darkly rumoured that mass shootings were taking place in the Tcheka prisons, and that all the prisons of Moscow and Petrograd were filled to overflowing.

We were in no doubt as to mass arrests having taken place, for even the Soviet papers had been full of descriptions of great trials, such as those involving the tanning syndicate, the Nicholas Railway, the North-Western Railway, the Putiloff works, the Vladimir Club, the Co-operators' Union, etc.—all in the space of six weeks. By the most modest calculations, these trials alone had made the Soviet prisons richer by not less than two thousand captives.

But all these arrests were in one way or another connected with economic breaches of the law. In a country where the Government, in the name of party interests, regulates the most

minute details of public and private economic life, these numerous breaches of the law are only natural. During the whole three years I spent in Soviet Russia, down to 1926 inclusive, the epidemic of arrests never stopped, and is still going on now.

Death sentences were often mentioned in the newspaper reports of trials, but the dozens who were shot monthly in execution of sentences passed in the courts did not go far towards confirming those dark rumours which reached us that hundreds were being put to death every week in the Tcheka prisons.

The news of mass arrests by the Tcheka on charges of espionage, counter-revolution, and political conspiracy did not find its way into the Press, but we had no doubt that it was true. One or another of my countrymen, or one of the members of the foreign missions, would tell us over the evening tea of an unsuccessful visit paid to some Russian acquaintance. Visitors were met with terrified faces, and the stereotyped phrase was uttered: "Things are going badly with us. Kolia (or Mania) has been arrested. We have had no news of him (or of her) at all for many weeks now."

I myself went, in January, to visit a family who lived a long way from the central part of the city. It was the family of an old professor of law,¹ and consisted of eight persons living in three rooms with the most primitive furniture. The house was in a disgusting state, half ruined, and the professor and his family never took off their warm clothing, for they could not afford to buy wood to heat the flat. One of the professor's sons had made his way abroad by stealth, and had now lived there for more than two years. Before I left for Soviet Russia he asked me to go and see his relatives and give them money and letters, which he sent to me in the diplomatic mail-bag of one of the foreign Consulates.

At the time of this, my last, visit the professor's daughter had just obtained her doctor's degree, and his son, a lad of

¹ The branches of study of both the professor and his daughter have been changed, for obvious reasons.

eighteen, had been expelled from the technological institute as being of "*bourgeois* origin". The brother and sister had been arrested a week before my visit on suspicion of belonging to the Social Democratic Party. I learnt at the same time that searches and a number of arrests had taken place at the flats of several of our mutual acquaintances. This time I left the professor's flat with some anxiety on my own account, and I did not breathe freely till I crossed the threshold of our Finland House.

When visiting any of my acquaintances, I always took with me, by way of an advance guard, a Russian friend of mine named Sidoroff. I had known him from my earliest years, and he was under many obligations to me and my family. Thanks to his proletarian origin and cunning, Sidoroff occupied a modest but "safe" post in the office of one of the professional unions, and was even a member of the party. My meetings with Sidoroff generally took place at some tea-shop or second-class café. We used to chat for a little about things in general and then go to see one of my acquaintances. Having jumped off the tram and approached the house I wanted, I sent Sidoroff on ahead to reconnoitre, while I myself walked past and waited for my friend at some shop-window. If Sidoroff reported that there was no ambush or anything suspicious, I said good-bye to him and went to see my acquaintances. I always did this, not so much from anxiety for myself as for fear of unpleasantness being caused to my friends, for whom acquaintance with a foreigner might be turned into a "case of espionage and counter-revolution".

Sometimes I fell into an ambush, or it would be more correct to say that Sidoroff fell into it, for I, as usual, was waiting for him in the street. Sidoroff, thanks to his numerous official duties and his party ticket, excited no suspicion and was always released. But he was once kept in prison for four days, and after that incident prudence demanded that I should find a new companion to act as advance guard.

My new scout was a boy of twelve, the son of an old servant of some people I had known a long time. His mother now

worked at home as a seamstress. We fitted up two cardboard boxes and put three men's shirts in one and some ladies' underclothing in the other. The little boy used one of these boxes or the other according to circumstances, and went to the flat I intended to visit on the pretext of delivering goods, pretending to have mistaken the customer's address.

This little companion of mine was the first to notice when I began to be followed: he perceived it before I did myself.

Clearly my hour had struck, and despite all the precautions I had taken, I had not the power to change what was written in the book of my life. But I will speak of this later.

CHAPTER IX

Foreign Optimists—Logic and Instinct—Tragedy of a Brother Officer—I Meet Another Old Comrade—A Smart Dinner-party—My Suspicions Justified—Polish Espionage Trial

I MENTIONED in a previous chapter that all we foreigners who had lived in Soviet Russia for only a short time were disinclined to believe the rumours of mass shootings by the Tcheka—that is, shootings not preceded by public trial. The Soviet Press now publishes no reports of these shootings. By “now” I mean since the introduction of “Nep”, for in the era of open terror, the era of militant Communism, long lists of persons shot were published not only by the Soviet papers, but also by the Tcheka in special brochures.

It is astonishing how inclined people always are to optimism, and how little is required to make us believe what is agreeable to us and completely blind as to what is disagreeable. We all without exception knew perfectly well that the nature and methods of Soviet rule were quite unchanged and could not change, seeing that its whole policy was guided by the interests of the Communist International under the supervision of the Tcheka. We could all of us without exception see how multitudes of people were openly and secretly flung into prison and the whole population terrorized. There could not, it would seem, have been any reason for our disbelieving the reports about the horrors in the Tcheka prisons. We should, as a corrective to such mental blindness, have put the following question to ourselves:

“Seeing that the Tcheka is omnipotent and despotic, seeing that the country is ruled by a pure dictatorship, seeing that domiciliary searches, the use of *provocateurs*, and administrative tyranny have become part of the system of government, why should there not be mass executions without trial?”

So spoke the voice of logic. But people whose minds have been formed in the old civilized conditions, under the reign of law and amid normal human relations, are always guided

in their conclusions, not by logic alone, but by their consciences and emotions. Our consciences and hearts refused to believe the reports of mass executions without trial, and I personally regarded all these rumours as the empty chatter of a terrified population. My fellow-countrymen and friends in various foreign missions, who had already succeeded in acquiring a knowledge of Soviet life and methods of government, would offer no opinion but "Don't worry; those who live longest will see the most".

At the end of January 1924 I met in the street, quite accidentally, the sister of a former brother officer of mine in the Russian Imperial Fleet. Although it was nine years since we had last met at Senator A.'s house, I recognized at once, in this worn woman dressed in cheap mourning, Miss T., in old days a beauty and a leader of society.

Her brother, my old comrade, had been arrested several times and finally left in peace. In the "Nep" period, like many ex-officers, he became to some extent reconciled to the régime, and even secured himself some very small post in one of the commercial-industrial Soviet undertakings. This post yielded him a miserable subsistence; but he felt that his former officer's rank would now be a thing of the past, and that he would no longer be reminded of his old profession of "Tsarist" officer by searches, arrests, or threats. So poor T. thought, and he felt almost happy, now that he was able to keep his mother and sister and hoped for a further development of "Nep".

In October he had suddenly been arrested on suspicion of counter-revolutionary activities and espionage. One of the Russian *émigrés* living abroad had been careless enough to mention T.'s name in a letter to his own friends in Russia. This letter was found in the possession of one of the thoughtless *émigrés* correspondents in the course of one of the usual "sweeps" carried out periodically by the Tcheka. It led to the arrest of a large number of people, including the unlucky T. and his sister. The girl was released from prison in December, but her brother and several other persons arrested on the same

charge were shot by order of the Moscow Tcheka—that is, without trial.

A short time after this meeting I came across another of the many cases of mass execution, carried out on no other grounds than the suspiciousness of the Tcheka and the work of its *agents provocateurs*. But I do not wish to embark on an exhaustive recital of all these horrible facts, for I shall deal with all this in the chapters devoted to my experiences in Soviet prisons. There I was able to observe, “as large as life”, the whole aspect of Soviet existence which is hidden from the public eye. There I saw with my own eyes *hundreds* of people who were being slaughtered without any kind of trial.

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At the beginning of February 1924 I ran into my old school comrade and brother-officer in the Imperial Fleet, L., not far from our house. He greeted me with great pleasure and, without the slightest delay or a shade of fear, invited me to dine with him. On my remarking with emphasis that I was now a foreigner, and that a visit from me might have all manner of disagreeable consequences for him, he gave a light laugh and said:

“All you foreigners exaggerate awfully. Things are not nearly as horrible as you think they are.”

The day after this meeting I went to dine at L.’s flat.

As is always the case in Soviet Russia, the main entrance was closed, and I had to go in by the back entrance. I passed through the kitchen, where a cook in a white cap was busily at work, and entered an admirably furnished flat, bearing not the slightest mark of the hurricane of revolution, terror, and famine years that had passed over it.

In the comfortable drawing-room, illuminated by the soft light of a shaded lamp, I found a fairly large and smartly dressed company. My fears that my dinner jacket would shock the persecuted “old régime people” were completely dissipated at the sight of men dressed as well as myself, in dinner jackets, and *décolletées* ladies in smart and fashionable dresses.

L. himself glittered with diamond rings, carried a gold cigar-case, and treated his guests with a surprisingly officious amiability.

Soon after I had arrived, the singer Madame X., accompanied by Levinson, entered the room. Among the guests were two prominent Soviet officials, "former" people who had accepted the new régime, the Polish representative in the evacuation question, who up to the Revolution had been a Russian naval officer, and the technical director of one of the textile factories—all with their wives except myself.

The dinner was excellent, and wine flowed in abundance.

Over our cups of coffee and cigars L. and I recalled our schooldays; and it was just those schooldays that gave me the right to ask my old schoolmate how, and by what miracle, he had managed not only to retain his former prosperity but so courageously to continue his old way of life in defiance of the all-pervading terror of the Tcheka.

My schoolmate's answer did not satisfy me, and my mistrust of him became still stronger.

According to his own account, he held some sort of post on some sort of commission formed to dispose of the technical material left over at the end of the war. It seemed to me more than doubtful whether he could have earned money *sub rosa* through these sales. In view of the insignificant position he held, and the strict control of such operations by the Tcheka, he could not have continued long to earn money in such a way. The trials of large numbers of persons for corruption, frequently reported in the papers, and the shooting of dozens daily in execution of sentences of the courts, testified to this.

L. told me that he had succeeded in concealing his wife's jewellery and his own and saving it from confiscation, and had now, under "Nep", sold it advantageously. In addition to this, he said, his wife's sister was giving concerts abroad with immense success and was sending him considerable sums.

All these stories were flatly untrue. In the first place, L. would have been imprisoned long ago for having in his possession large sums from abroad. In the second place, I found

out much later that L.'s sister-in-law was an employee in one of the Soviet diplomatic missions abroad. Thirdly, however much money L. might have had, he could not have lived as luxuriously as he did unless permission had been given from higher quarters for some secret reason.

In Soviet Russia, under "Nep", foreign *concessionnaires* can live luxuriously with relative safety. Sometimes "Nepmen" try to live in unconcealed luxury, but this nearly always ends in their being arrested and the whole of their property confiscated. If a "Nepman" lives luxuriously, it is absolutely conclusive proof, under the Soviet régime, that his gains are the fruit of a whole series of illegal manipulations.

In the conditions governing Soviet life and Soviet law, it is totally impossible for a Soviet citizen to earn a considerable sum of money gradually by legal means. One can, therefore, estimate with absolute certainty, from a Soviet citizen's style of living, how far his occupation, from the point of view of the Tcheka, is a legal one. There is nothing astonishing in the "superhuman acuteness" displayed by the Tcheka. As the whole life of the inhabitant of Soviet Russia is hedged about with thousands of prohibitions of every kind, and he is really allowed only to breathe—and not always that—no special acuteness is required to fill the prisons with law-breakers.

I did not believe a word L. said. Consequently, I was sure that, even if L. himself was not, his wife and her sister were secret agents of the Tcheka.

The singer Madame X., Levinson's mistress, was going to Paris in a day or two. She rather cleverly turned the conversation on to my relations with my South American firm and enlarged on the difficulty which Soviet citizens wishing to go to America had in getting a visa. Half joking, half in earnest, the fascinating diva endeavoured by carefully framed questions to induce me to speak frankly. What interested her most of all, to the best of my recollection, was the question whether the heads of my firm intended to recall me and whether I knew anything of the state of the negotiations which the Soviet Government was carrying on to secure recognition from the

Government of the republic where our firm's plantations and head offices were.

With the best will in the world I could not have satisfied the lady's curiosity. I had very little information concerning the policy of foreign States, and the little South American republic in whose economic affairs the influence of my firm played a dominating part did not base its policy towards Soviet Russia on economic considerations at all, rightly holding that Soviet trade and finances could not have any effect on the budget even of a small republic.

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The representative of the Polish re-evacuation commission, Mr. Tch., a very good-looking and dignified young man, had known our host when they were both serving in the Imperial Fleet. His behaviour was very reserved. As far as I could gather from the conversation, he had been at L.'s several times.

Soon after this dinner-party I met Mr. Tch. again twice accidentally, in a restaurant and in the street. I was much astonished when one day a report got about that the Tcheka had discovered a regular system of espionage on behalf of Poland, and that the organizer of this espionage, in the opinion of the Tcheka, was no other than Tch., who in the meantime had left the country in the normal manner.

Contrary to its custom, the Tcheka decided that the Polish espionage case should be tried in public. The trial, as always, was made to assume enormous dimensions; there were several dozen prisoners. The result of this trial, for which there was no ground whatever, was that a number of people were shot and others sentenced to ten years' imprisonment.

An astonishing feature was that neither my schoolfellow L. nor the singer Madame X., whom Mr. Tch. had met several times at L.'s, was brought into the case even as a witness. This was all the more surprising in that Tch. had been under close observation for a long time. This could be judged from the large number of persons arrested whose sole offence consisted in a bowing acquaintance with Tch.

I followed the whole course of the Polish espionage trial in the papers. I was by then in prison, and that trial caused me days of anxiety. At any moment, by a freak of blind destiny, my acquaintance with Tch. might be discovered—a completely innocent acquaintance, but one which would have been sufficient to destroy me utterly, charged as I was with most serious offences against the Soviet power.

It still seems to me a curious and suspicious circumstance that my meeting with Mr. Tch. at L.'s, purely casual as it was, was never made the subject of any questions by the examining judges of the Tcheka. They constantly bewildered me with endless questions, mentioning the names of people I had never met in my life, or whom I did not even remember, so fleeting had been my acquaintance with them. It can hardly be supposed that a meeting between two people like Tch. and myself, both under close observation by the Tcheka, was not known to that body.

The idea inevitably suggests itself that it was in the interests of the Tcheka not to question me about my acquaintance with Tch., for this would have led to my mentioning the place of our meeting, and in consequence L. himself and the singer Madame X. would necessarily have been involved in the interrogation.

This would have meant, in Tchekist language, the *proval*¹ of two prominent secret agents and *provocateurs*, i.e. an end to responsible work on their part for the benefit of the Tcheka.

¹ *Proval* = lit. collapse, sinking, disappearance.

CHAPTER X

Failure of South American Negotiations—I Contemplate Leaving Russia—A Fatal Conference—First Meeting with Messing—Krassin's Last Word—A Brush with Messing

AT THE BEGINNING of February I received letters from my firm in South America, sent on to me from Helsingfors in the diplomatic bag to evade the shameless prying of the Soviet censorship.

The last of these letters, despatched from South America at the beginning of January, contained a piece of news which was bound to have an important effect on my business. It appeared that the preliminary semi-official negotiations between the Soviet delegates and the Government of the republic with a view to the recognition of the Soviet Government *de jure* and *de facto* had not been crowned with success. Simultaneously with the departure of the Soviet delegates, the intended big deals in rubber, sugar,¹ cotton, and our tanning materials had been cancelled.

There was nothing left for me to do but express to my firm my regret that the anticipations contained in my reports had proved to be correct, and ask them to release me from my duties as trade representative in Soviet Russia.

There was no sense whatever in my remaining any longer in Soviet Russia, for casual sales of small consignments of our goods formed no part of my firm's programme. The proposed concession for the permanent and exclusive supply of our products was in the circumstances an absolute impossibility. There could not even be any question of isolated deliveries on a large scale, for I saw quite clearly that every big deal was arranged by the Soviet Government with a definite political object, and that the actual needs and requirements of Soviet

¹ It is astonishing that the Soviet Government should have proposed to buy sugar from South America, as a sufficient quantity of sugar for domestic needs is produced in Russia. Obviously the proposal was made in order to enhance the prospects of official commercial relations with the Soviet Government.

industry and the interests of the population were hardly considered at all.

At the beginning of 1924 it was important for the Soviet Government, for certain reasons, to set foot firmly in South America. For this purpose it selected one of the small South American republics, whence, having consolidated its position there, it could extend its influence to other neighbouring republics. For the moment the game was lost, and liberal promises of huge purchases reaching astronomical figures availed the Soviet Government nothing.

I began to think of leaving, but first I had to wind up the affairs of my private office. The news I had received, of course, made no outward change in my relations with those Soviet organizations with which I had been negotiating with a view to a concession.

I daily expected proposals from Soviet quarters which would facilitate the winding-up of all my previous negotiations.

In the middle of February, Krassin and Lezhava came to Petrograd. I was rung up on the telephone from the tanning syndicate and asked to go there for a conference. I shall never forget that conference to the end of my life, for at it my fate was decided, and from that moment I was delivered into the hands of the Tcheka.

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Several people awaited me in the large, tastelessly furnished study of the director of the syndicate, already familiar to me. Among those assembled I noticed Krassin's Mephistophelian face, the restless Erisman, and the boorish Lezhava. The other three I did not know, but in the course of conversation it appeared that two were prominent officials of the Commissariat for Foreign Trade. I did not find out then who the third man was, but I met him again six weeks after the conference, when I was in prison. He was the director of the counter-espionage section of the Tcheka—the well-known Tchekist Messing.

I had hardly had time to greet those present when the expansive Erisman turned to me and exclaimed in an agitated tone:

"Now, Boris Leonidovitch, we must come to some kind of agreement. There has been plenty of time to think it all over."

I replied with perfect tranquillity that I had all the correspondence dealing with our negotiations in my portfolio. It was clear from the correspondence, I said, that *I* was the last person in the world who could be charged with delaying matters or with being unwilling to bring the affair to a satisfactory conclusion.

With these words I laid all the documents on the table, and said, turning to Krassin:

"I hope that perhaps your presence here in person will make it possible for us to come to some kind of definite agreement."

Krassin replied:

"As it is not a question of an industrial concession, but of giving your firm a monopoly for the permanent supply of goods to the Soviet tanning industry, the question could have been decided in the manner your principals desire only if the State in which your firm is had been in official relations with us. As this is not so, our agreement must be built up again on a different basis, as has been done in the case of other firms with whose States we are not in official relations."

"A different basis" for the agreement meant that we should deliver our goods to the *Gostorg* (State Trade Syndicate) depots on Soviet Russian territory, and that all sales of our goods should be conducted by the *Gostorg* on a long-term credit basis, without any guarantee but the agreement itself.

I therefore considered this the most favourable moment possible to refuse the proposal, basing my refusal on the impossibility of corresponding with my firm on the subject.

A load fell from my shoulders. I could now leave Soviet Russia and go home.

Quite unexpectedly, Messing intervened. He had remained in the background during the conference, and had only thrown an occasional glance, sharp and hostile, in my direction. He now asked me in a monotonous voice, with a strong Estonian accent:

"Will you please tell us how you have corresponded with your firm?"

This question astonished me so much by its irrelevance that I could only reply:

"I don't understand your question, and it seems to me to have nothing to do with the subject of our conference."

At that moment Krassin and Lezhava rose, excused themselves on the ground of urgent business, took leave of me, and went out of the room.

My sharp reply did not seem to have annoyed Messing at all. Despite a glance which Erisman threw him, he smiled, and asked me a second time:

"I believe letters to America have a very long way to go. You are probably going home to Finland now, for there is no point in your waiting for your firm's reply here. It is much easier to carry on correspondence from Finland?"

The last words sounded like a question, but I saw no use in replying, and, taking leave of all those present, I left the study.

I was rather a long time putting on my fur coat in the lobby, and looking in a mirror, suddenly saw the reflection of Messing standing in the passage, looking in my direction and making a sign with his head. Then he went towards the exit.

In the lobby itself, close to the doors, I perceived two men of quite inconspicuous exterior, dressed almost alike in short overcoats, with astrakhan collars, and caps to match. I pretended not to notice them, and as I passed I could feel the police spies' hostile, pricking glance.

As my car moved off I turned round and saw the two agents come down the steps. One of them pointed at me and spoke eagerly to his companion.

CHAPTER XI

The Tcheka Sets a Trap—Koponen Arrested—My Anxiety Increases—I Ask Permission to Leave Russia—Clumsy Detectives—The Charge against Koponen

A MAN WHO HAS LIVED a few months in Soviet Russia does not lose his composure when he finds that he is being followed. The agents of the Tcheka observe the movements of every foreigner, and you gradually grow accustomed to it. Sometimes the work is done very clumsily or with extraordinary persistence; then you begin to notice it, and this is alarming. I had sometimes noticed agents on my track before this, but it was evident that I was not being regularly followed in the street, for despite my caution and watchfulness, it was not often that I found "setters" (as Tcheka agents are nicknamed) after me.

From the day of my last conference I began to notice that the Tcheka was observing my movements with increased vigilance.

At the end of February I had gradually cleared up all my personal affairs and telegraphed to my firm that I should shortly be leaving for Finland. To avoid undesirable curiosity on the part of the Tcheka, the telegram to South America was sent from Helsingfors, to which place I sent the text of the telegram, and also letters, in the diplomatic bag. About this time my secretary, Koponen, told me that he had recently met a lady, an old acquaintance of his, who had begged him, for old friendship's sake, to get her out of a troublesome position. Her brother, she told him—a Soviet Customs employee on the Soviet-Finnish frontier—had bought, very cheap, a small box of American typewriter ribbons. She was afraid of a sudden domiciliary visit, and therefore asked Koponen to conceal the goods "at the Finnish office where he was employed", for "those disgusting Tchekists would not dare to search the Consulate building."

Koponen very sensibly said to the lady that in the first place the office did not belong to him, and in the second, that only the actual premises of the Consulate possessed extra-territorial

rights, and not the whole building, but added that typewriter ribbons were goods of such a harmless kind that he was ready to help her out by concealing them temporarily in his own flat.

I was much agitated on hearing Koponen's story; for I was far from sharing his opinion that "a little box" containing a few dozen typewriter ribbons was a harmless article. In my view, it was contraband; and, moreover, I was absolutely convinced that the whole story from beginning to end was an *agent provocateur's* trick of the crudest description.

I therefore demanded, in the most decisive manner, that Koponen should immediately destroy the "little box" and all its contents. Knowing Koponen by nature to be soft-hearted and scrupulous to a fault, I at once proposed that he should take from me the sum required to compensate his friend for the loss which my decisive measures were causing her. Koponen did not take the money, because he did not know the value of the ribbons, but went straight home, promising to attend to the matter at once.

I was very much upset all the rest of the day and that evening, for I had an uncomfortable feeling that all this business with the ribbons must have something to do with me.

Next morning, on getting out of the car, I noticed at the entrance to the Consulate the two police spies I knew already. Koponen met me at the office, as usual, with his friendly, cheerful smile, and said jokingly:

"You see provocation and spies everywhere. You needn't worry. I've fixed the whole thing up and kept your money for you. A bottle of champagne with you! I gave the box back to Mrs. L. yesterday."

This news did not ease my mind particularly, but I did not refuse the bottle of champagne, on condition that Koponen himself went out to get it at a shop close by. As Koponen, smiling, was about to go and get the wine, I said to him, very quietly: "When you go down the steps, just see if there aren't two fellows hanging about there"; and I described my police agents as exactly as I could. "When you come back, have another

good look at them; and when we go out together we'll both have a good look at them."

When the wine was brought, Koponen, despite the foaming champagne, was rather uneasy, and made no more jokes about my "persecution mania".

On March 8th Koponen did not come to the office, and it was not till a fortnight later that I succeeded in discovering that he had been arrested and was in the Tcheka prison in the Shpalernaja Street.

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Koponen's disappearance troubled and disturbed me very much. My own position also began to cause me anxiety, for I became more and more firmly convinced that the whole Koponen affair, from his meeting with the lady to his arrest, was only a prelude to my own arrest. I vainly endeavoured to make clear to myself what the causes were that had thus drawn the Tcheka's attention to me, but analyse as I might, from beginning to end, my activities during my stay in Soviet Russia, I could not find the slightest formal reason which could give even the Tcheka the right to arrest me. The advice of one of my closest friends was that I ought to leave the country as quickly as possible.

According to the Soviet regulations no one can leave the territory of the Soviet Republic without a special permit. The procedure for obtaining such a permit is not so long for foreigners as for Soviet citizens, but nevertheless at least three or four days must elapse before all the necessary formalities are complied with.

As the term for which the Soviet authorities had given me permission to remain in the Soviet State expired in the middle of March, my departure could not arouse the morbid suspicions of the Tcheka, and could not possibly be connected with Koponen's arrest.

In the middle of March I directed a Consulate employee to obtain permission for me to leave the territory of the Soviet Republic, and my passport was sent to the "special section for foreigners".

The watch set upon me had become absolutely open, but the work of observing me was for the most part carried out at the house in the Nevsky Prospect. The police spies, always in couples, did regular turns of duty at the stopping-place of the trams, just opposite the main entrance to our Consulate. Every day from my office window, through binoculars, I looked at the quite familiar, repugnant faces of the Soviet Pinkertons.

I was at pains to go to the office in the Consular motor-car, with the Consul and Consulate employees, and I returned home in the same manner. There was less risk thus of my disappearing suddenly, as often happens with the Tcheke's victims.

But I must say that the skill of the Tcheke agents leaves much to be desired.

Sometimes I left my office by an inner passage leading to the other exit from our house, which opens into the Malaja Koniusshennaja Street, a side street running into the Nevsky Prospect. I had only to put my head outside the door to see my spies strolling about by the tram halt in the Nevsky. If I chose a favourable moment, I could run quickly to a cab or waiting motor-car without attracting the attention of the spies observing the main entrance at all, cross the Nevsky, and go quietly home. Once one of them caught sight of me when I was already in a cab, in the Nevsky, and was turning to reach the side opposite the Consulate. As I was not very worried at that time, I smiled involuntarily at the sight of the one spy, with consternation and astonishment written large on his intensely stupid face, and of the other hurriedly taking my photograph out of his overcoat pocket. They stood there in the street, looking at me and the photograph in turn. These two Soviet Pinkertons, if you please, had been watching me for a month at least, and they did not know the Consulate had two entrances!

No open watch was kept over me at the house in the Ekaterinhofsky Prospect. One reason for this was that the street is not a very frequented one, and that police agents would attract attention. Another was, in all probability, that I was kept under observation through one of the subordinate members of the

personnel of the house, or someone belonging to their families, or a maidservant, for there could be no doubt whatever that the Tcheka had taken care to have its agent in our house, as in all others.

From the time of Koponen's arrest I felt myself half arrested. I could not go out in the evening, for there was nowhere to go; I might have done my acquaintances serious harm.

In the middle of March our Consulate at last succeeded in ascertaining, through the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, that Koponen was in the Tcheka prison in the Shpalernaja Street (formerly the house of preventive detention). He was in the "section of special importance", and had been accused of dealings in contraband of war, punishable by Soviet law with sentences ranging from three years' imprisonment to the death penalty.

It was a great blow to me, but I of all people had the least power to help my colleague in his distress. The contrary, indeed, was the case; my interference would only have made his position worse, for Heaven alone knew of what crimes the Tcheka did not suspect me.

CHAPTER XII

Professional Escorts—My Plans for Escape—Dispute with My Guides—In the Woods—A Reconnaissance—Timothy's Fate in Doubt—Fiasco—A Last Hope Fails—Summoned to the Tcheka

ABOUT THE SAME TIME that official news of Koponen's arrest was received, an employee of our Consulate told me that my permit to leave the country was being held up until certain points involving delay had been disposed of.

In the meantime I succeeded in establishing relations with reliable people whose business it was to transport "live stock"—i.e. fugitives from Soviet territory—over the frontier. The profession of escort over the frontier is a very profitable one in Soviet Russia, and there are a great number of these escorts; they are divided into several special branches—winter, summer, land, and sea. Some of them are at the same time engaged in contraband traffic, some in espionage, and some are—*agents provocateurs*. The highest charges for transport across the frontier are levied by the escorts who devote themselves entirely to the transport of "live stock". They are admirably informed as to routes, have the very latest news regarding the frontier patrols, have huts in various secret places fitted up as temporary refuges, and are always lightly equipped and excellently armed.

March is not a favourable time in the North for making one's escape, for the nights are beginning to get light and conspicuous tracks are left in the half-frozen, wet snow. But I had no choice; an attempt at flight had to be made. I had two guides. The best guarantees of their reliability were the names of the persons they had already conveyed over the frontier at different times. I knew two of their previous clients very well, and one of them I still meet in Helsingfors.

I am obliged to condense this part of my narrative, for one of my guides is still alive.

A couple of days before the date arranged for my flight I pretended to be ill in the morning and remained in bed in my room. I did everything I could to let everyone in the house

know that I was ill. On the first day of my illness I sent for the doctor twice, and on the second day I asked the maidservant to send for him again.

On the evening of the third day, in a state of great agitation, I proceeded to carry out my plan, for it was impossible to wait any longer.

All went most successfully, and in the crowd at the former Mariinsky Theatre, not far from our house, I covered my tracks completely.

Luckily for me, a furious snowstorm was raging; indeed, I had difficulty in finding, at the appointed place, the cabman who was to take me to the flat where I was awaited. There I changed into clothes suitable to a fugitive, and the three of us set off in a country sleigh, at a quick trot despite the snowstorm. Both my companions surprised me very much, and aroused my suspicions in a high degree. When I was changing my clothes, I took my revolver out of the pocket of my fur coat and put it into the pocket of the short coat I was to wear. One of my escort, who was supervising my change of clothes, said:

"Throw that away. Our guns are enough, and you won't need that at all. If they catch you with arms on you, it's all up, but if you're unarmed you've a chance of keeping a whole skin."

I protested, pointing out that an extra shot never did any harm on such occasions.

"Don't talk like that," my guide replied in business-like tones; "it's just all you people who aren't specialists who are likely to cause quite useless shooting. We've got into a mess before through a fire-eater of your sort. As to that, if you don't trust us, we'll take you back to the town; but we won't take you with the gun on any account. That's our rule."

There was nothing to be done; I was making a leap into the unknown as it was, and if they meant to betray me—well, there was no way out for me, anyhow.

"Devil take them, come what will!" said I to myself, and off we went.

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In the woods, the storm seemed to have died down, and, thank Heaven, it had got quite dark. Our felt boots trod softly on the fresh frozen snow. At the edge of the wood we took a side path, and my guides began to shovel away the snow and remove a heap of brushwood which concealed a small cavern or hole in the ground.

One of my guides entered the cavern with me, and the other, after whispering to his comrade, walked swiftly along the edge of the wood and disappeared in the darkness.

We had to wait till he returned, for it was necessary to find out whether the road was clear. My guide told me that the commander of a Soviet frontier post in this area had shot himself four days earlier, and that the whole sector was now held by a new unit sent from Petrograd.

The change was in our favour from one point of view, as the new men did not know the country well; but, on the other hand, the new commander might have made fresh arrangements and changed the system by which the frontier area was guarded.

My guide's placid countenance seemed to indicate that all was going excellently, but I felt wretched, and bitterly regretted that I had not stayed in the house at X. which had been our last halting-place before this adventure in the woods. I could have remained there for a couple of days in perfect quiet, leaving it to my guides to find out the new dispositions of the frontier force, instead of sitting in a hole in the woods, and absolutely unarmed at that. There is nothing more horrible in the world than the knowledge that one is defenceless, and this feeling is more acute than ever when one is with an armed companion as bodyguard, for it is then an unbearable humiliation to be unarmed and defenceless. I could not forgive myself for having, in obedience to the impulse of a moment, submitted to the conditions my guides imposed and not kept my revolver. Now, sitting in the hole, it was impossible to retrieve this blunder, and I could only regret it and blame myself for my thoughtlessness.

Our watches showed that it was two o'clock in the morning, and we calculated that our comrade should soon be back from his reconnaissance. We waited a little longer, and then decided

to leave our hiding-place and move nearer to the edge of the wood. When we had gone a few yards, my guide decided that it would be better for me to go back to the cavern and wait there, as the snowstorm was still raging and my presence was a hindrance to my guide. He was anxious to meet his comrade, who might be wandering about quite close to the edge of the wood.

I sat in the cavern for not more than half an hour, but I felt that time was standing still. Suddenly the outline of a huge pair of legs clad in felt boots appeared at the entrance to the hole and my guide leapt into the cavern.

"I say, did you hear shots? have they got Timothy?"

"What shall we do now?" I asked. I must admit that I had not heard any shots; but my hearing is poor, and in the hole, amid the noise of the snowstorm, I might not have heard distant shooting.

My guide remained silent; he was obviously either thinking deeply or listening to something. At last he rose with a decisive gesture and said:

"It's no use thinking, and time is valuable. If they've done for Timothy, they'll begin to search the whole sector at once; and if they've taken Timothy alive, they'll start torturing him. He's a stout fellow, but he's a human being all the same. . . . Let's get out of this as quick as we can!"

Agitated as I was, I could not reconcile myself to the idea that if Timothy had not been captured we were abandoning him to the caprice of fate. I said so to my guide, but he smiled ironically and growled, as he crawled out of the hole: "If Timothy is alive and a free man, he'll bolt from us now like the devil from incense. We're only a hindrance to him now. So let's be off. Follow me!"

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At six in the morning we reached the suburbs of Petrograd in a country sleigh, and at about nine o'clock, in my ordinary clothes, I got out of a cab at the corner of the Malaja Konius-hennaja Street and the Zhukovsky. I reached my office through

the entrance in the Malaja Koniushennaja Street without being followed or noticed by anyone. From the window, through my glasses, I could see the two familiar Pinkertons on duty at the tram halt, opposite our front steps in the Nevsky Prospect.

Not having received any definite answer from the "foreign section" regarding my permit to leave the country, I had recourse to the help of our Consulate-General, which, observing due formalities, asked the Soviet authorities in writing to explain the reasons for the delay in giving me a departure visa.

The elections to the Finnish Chamber were to take place on April 4, 1924. The Consul-General, knowing of my difficult position and wishing to despatch me across the frontier by the legal route, included my name in the list of persons living at the Consulate and asked that a general permit might be given to all the persons named to go abroad for a short time to take part in the Finnish elections. Those on the list were the Consul-General himself, his first secretary, two or three others, and myself. The list was returned by the Soviet authorities on April 1st, with the answer that a collective permit to leave the country could not be given, and that only persons in possession of diplomatic passports—i.e. the Consul and his secretary—could go to the elections. They left the same day.

That morning I received a notice in the following terms:

The State Political Direction requests you to present yourself at the offices of the Direction, room No. 184, at 12 p.m. on April 4th, as a witness in case No. 12506 s. p. s. Attendance is obligatory.

Some illegible signatures followed.

On reading this notice I knew at once that the game was irretrievably lost. The three initials s. p. s. (special political section)¹ had a particularly disagreeable effect on me. As I was not accused of any offences, and Koponen had been employed in my office up to the time of his arrest, it was clear to me that case No. 12506 s. p. s. was Koponen's case, i.e. the contra-

¹ The initials in Russian were "tch. p. o." (*tchrezvytchayniy polititchesky otdiel*).

band affair worked up by an *agent provocateur*, described in a previous chapter. But why the awe-inspiring letters s. p. s. were added I could not understand. At any rate, these initials boded nothing good.

One of my friends—an employee of our Consulate, who had a thorough knowledge of Soviet administrative methods—read the notice from the Tcheika and said, in tones of conviction:

“You’re worrying yourself quite unnecessarily. They won’t dare to arrest you. It would mean an awful row. But how do you like the number—12506? Not bad for only the beginning of the year! and that only in the ‘s. p. s.’ section!”

My friend’s confident, jesting tone did not do much to set my mind at rest, and I continued to expect the worst. I spent the whole day in going through my papers and documents; some I deposited at the Consulate for safe custody; others I destroyed. In the evening I wrote farewell letters to my family in Finland and handed them over to the Consulate with the request that, if I were arrested, they should be forwarded in the diplomatic bag.

I refrained from making any further attempt at flight. That one unsuccessful adventure, which had cost a man’s life, had been enough for me. I ought to have thought about escaping two or three months before; to arrange the business in a hurry was only to endanger other people’s lives and my own. Moreover, still weightier reasons had unexpectedly arisen which made it impossible for me to think of flight. But this is not the time or place to enlarge on the subject.

At any rate I could count on my arrest not being of long duration, seeing that there was no case against me and there could be no question of my having committed any crime. The only event in which the Finnish Government would not be able to get me out of prison would be if I were proved guilty of a political or criminal offence.

So spoke common sense and logic. But in life, and especially in Soviet life, events by no means invariably coincide with the laws of logic and common sense.

CHAPTER XIII

An Unpleasant Journey—At the Tcheka Headquarters—My Examining Judge, Fomin—Mysterious Photographs—A Dilemma—I Commit a Faux Pas—Arrested—Drive to the Shpalernaja Prison

ON APRIL 4TH I lunched quite alone in our big dining-room and prepared to set out on my short but disagreeable journey.

In view of my possibly being arrested, I had intended to take with me a small bag containing the primary necessities, but at the very last moment I changed my mind. I decided that my foresight might arouse the suspicions of the Tcheka and suggest to them that I felt myself guilty of some offence.

It was a rather mild day, with not more than five degrees of frost;¹ I therefore put on a spring overcoat and an English ulster with a belt over it. I put my shaving things, soap, tooth-brush, brush and comb into my portfolio, thinking that with this outfit I could get on more or less for a day or two, after which I should "obviously" be released. Only two hours later I realized that nothing is obvious in this best of worlds.

There was a rank of sleighs almost in front of our house, and an old cabman, catching sight of me, began to shift about on his box, saying: "Yes, your Excellency! Where can I drive your Excellency?"

I got into the sleigh gloomily and flung the cabman a phrase which, short as it is, is always eloquent to Russian ears:

"To the Gorokhovaja. The Tcheka."

The cabman gave me a frightened glance, full of mistrust, and could only say, "O-o-oh! R-right away."

We drove along streets flooded with April sunshine. There was a feeling of spring in the mild air, but a premonition that my days of liberty were numbered oppressed me like a heavy stone laid on my heart.

¹ Fahrenheit.

At the huge building, No. 2 Gorokhovaja Street, I paid the cabman, who most sympathetically wished me a "pleasant journey".

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At the door of the "pleasant journey" a Red soldier stood on guard. At his direction I went up a broad, brilliantly polished staircase to the third floor.

Young men in green caps and long cavalry overcoats, carrying portfolios, hurried past me. The clinking of spurs was to be heard everywhere; the sentries were being relieved. The whole interior of the building, with its scrupulous official cleanliness, and those young men flitting in all directions in their smart cavalry uniforms, were suggestive less of a gloomy prison than of a military school or the general staff of an army.

I stopped at the door of room No. 184 and knocked. The door was opened immediately, and a middle-aged man, of middle height, with a very tired, bored expression, appeared on the threshold. There seemed to be no heating anywhere in the building, for the man who had opened the door of room No. 184 wore a light green cap and a long, tightly buttoned cavalry overcoat.

He raised his hand for an instant to the peak of his cap in answer to my inclination of the head, and asked me: "Are you the Finnish subject, Boris Leonidovitch Cederholm?" On my replying that I was, he saluted again, with a light clink of his spurs, and uttered the words:

"I am Fomin, examining judge in cases of special importance. Please come in and take a seat at the table. We are obliged to have a little talk with you."

It was a small room, containing two American tables and a few chairs of the same type. On the walls hung Lenin's portrait and lists of rules or regulations of some kind. A man in military uniform was sitting at one of the tables, writing. He did not honour me with so much as a look.

I sat down at Fomin's table, and noticed that the man who was writing stole a long, searching look at me.

After ferreting in his papers silently for a short time, Fomin looked sharply at me and asked: "Do you speak Russian well?", to which I replied that I spoke Russian perfectly.

"Then we shall settle the matter in a few minutes," Fomin said. "You probably know why we have put you to this inconvenience?"

"No, I don't know," I answered.

Fomin gave an involuntary frown, and the Tchekist sitting at the other table smiled maliciously.

"What, you really don't know?" Fomin asked in mocking tones. "You, an educated man—you're not going to play the obstinate game, like any peasant—I don't know, I don't know! Can't you really guess the riddle?"

I began to lose patience and said sharply: "Be so kind as to let me off guessing riddles and tell me why you have sent for me to come here."

Fomin's bored face seemed to light up. He burrowed in the drawer of his table and took out and laid before me a photograph of a middle-aged lady and another of a gentleman with a full black beard. I looked at these photographs of people entirely unknown to me with unfeigned astonishment and curiosity.

Before I had found words to say that the people were complete strangers to me, Fomin held out to me a third photograph. It was Koponen's portrait. I looked at Fomin quite quietly and said: "This is my employee, Mr. Koponen."

My answer finally put Fomin in a good humour. Tapping the portraits of the unknown lady and the bearded gentleman with his hand, and indicating Koponen's photograph with a movement of the head, he asked:

"Please tell me what you know about Koponen's relations with these two people. Do you know what dealings he had with them?"

"No, I don't know."

"Well, as you are still obstinate, it is my duty to read you a clause of the criminal code, from which you will see to what penalty you are liable if you refuse to give evidence voluntarily."

With these words, Fomin read me the following ordinance:

Every person summoned to interrogation by the responsible legal authorities or organs of inquiry is bound to give evidence frankly in reply to all questions directed to the elucidation of the offence which is the subject of inquiry. Failure to comply with this ordinance is punishable with imprisonment for a term of from six months to a year.

Persons who know that an offence has been committed are bound immediately to bring it to the knowledge of the organs of inquiry. Failure to do this is punishable with imprisonment for a minimum term of three years.

Having read this ordinance, Fomin asked whether I understood the sense of what he had read, and on my replying that I did, said:

"You see that it is in your interest to speak the truth. Otherwise I shall have to write an order for your arrest."

It was now quite evident that the whole Koponen affair was a devilish plan evolved by the Tcheka in order to enable them to arrest me. I was in a hopeless dilemma, from which I saw no issue. If I said that I knew about that wretched contraband business which they had tried to fasten on Koponen, they would arrest me for not having given information about it. If I said that I knew nothing about Koponen's affairs, they would arrest me for refusing to give evidence.

"Well, what about it, Citizen Cederholm? Are you willing to give evidence?"

"I know nothing about the private life of my employee Koponen. I cannot tell you anything of interest."

"It's a great pity you're so obstinate. An educated man like you! If there's nothing to be done with you, I shall have to arrest you. Sit down and think, perhaps you'll remember something."

Fomin took a printed form of some kind and began to fill it up.

Without any real object, but rather to relieve my feelings, I could not help saying:

"What you are doing is a monstrous piece of tyranny. You have no right to arrest me, a perfectly innocent man and a foreigner. You are taking a great risk, for the Finnish Government will know of my arrest immediately."

I knew that Fomin would not pay the slightest attention to this tirade, but I had to protest as a matter of principle.

Contrary to all expectation, Fomin replied with marked amiability:

"When your Government asks us the reason for your arrest, we shall inform them that you have been involved in a case of war contraband, and I doubt whether any Government in the world, even a *bourgeois* one, would encourage dealings in contraband. What is your opinion?" And Fomin looked at me, blinking craftily.

Then I lost all self-control, and beside myself, thumping with my fist on the table, I almost yelled:

"How dare you say such things to me? Show me first that I have anything whatever to do with all this contraband business, got up by your *provocateurs*! You could have arrested me at any time in nearly four months on any of your devilish pretexts. Do you think I didn't see your spies after me? You can accuse me a thousand times of whatever crimes you like; no one'll be such a fool as to believe the charges."

Fomin interrupted me. "It's no use getting excited," he said. "When you thought fit to say something just now about a contraband case got up by *provocateurs*, to what did you allude?"

Only then did I perceive that in my heat I had nearly made a *faux pas* and given away poor Koponen. I regained my self-control and said, quite quietly:

"I am talking about the contraband business which you are trying to fasten on me in order to make out a case against me. As this originates with the Tcheka, it can be nothing else than the work of *provocateurs*."

"We will discuss this matter with you further, Citizen Cederholm; but, for the moment, would you be kind enough to sign this little document?" And Fomin held out to me the printed form he had filled up.

On it was written approximately what follows:

I, plenipotentiary of the Petrograd Tcheka, examining judge in cases of special importance, have ordered the arrest of B. L. Cederholm, Finnish subject, by virtue of Clause — of the criminal code of

the U.S.S.R., as a measure of precaution, seeing that Citizen Cederholm has refused to give evidence frankly in case No. 12506 s. p. s.

Of course I refused to sign this exasperating nonsense, an insult to justice and human self-respect.

"As you like," Fomin said, shrugging his shoulders. He rang the bell, and directed the orderly who appeared to call somebody. In a moment two young men entered the room, one in civilian clothes, the other in military uniform. Turning to them, Fomin read the protocol aloud to me again, and said, indicating me:

"This citizen will not sign the protocol. Would you mind testifying that the protocol has been read to him in your presence?"

The young men signed the protocol, and the one in military uniform said, turning to me: "Walk in front of me." Drawing his revolver from its case, he skilfully went through my pockets and let me go ahead of him. He took my portfolio in his other hand, and we went along endless passages. Everywhere we met a number of young men in uniform and in civilian dress, but none of them took the slightest notice of us.

We entered a very large, ill-lighted room, with a telephone, and forms along the walls, and my conductor shouted:

"The commander of the escort, to receive a prisoner!"

A sergeant (to judge from the badges on his overcoat collar) came up to us, and my conductor handed over to him some papers, my portfolio, and myself.

The sergeant also felt my pockets and went through the contents of my portfolio. Then he said:

"Will you walk, or would you like to take a cab? Have you got any money?"

I said I had money, and that I would like to go in a cab.

"How much money have you got? Let's see."

On seeing that I had enough money to pay the cab and should not involve the State in loss, the sergeant called two soldiers, handed over the papers, the portfolio, and myself to their charge in return for a receipt, and we moved off once more along the passages towards the exit to the street.

I walked in the middle, the escorting soldiers in front of and behind me, with revolvers in their hands. We got into a one-horse cab, and the senior soldier of the escort told the cabman to drive to the "special prison" in the Shpalernaja Street (formerly the place of detention for prisoners awaiting trial).

The streets, that spring-like afternoon, were cheerful and full of hurrying crowds, the tram bells rang vigorously, the motor-cars rattled, and, for me, the life of the Soviet city, which but yesterday had seemed so sad, terrorized, and impoverished, was transformed into a carnival of free, happy people. Everything in the world is relative, and when one is going to prison in the company of guards with revolvers in their hands, even the life of the Soviet citizen seems liberty.

We approached the huge, five-storied prison building, and my heart was heavy as I looked at the small, barred windows and then at the blue sky and the sunlit, snow-covered street, with its merrily chirping sparrows.

Was I destined ever to get out of prison and out of this country alive? What was happening now in my own native land? Should I ever see my family and my friends again? Oh, in what a foolish business I had become entangled!

The cab stopped at the prison gates. While I was paying the driver, one of my escort rang the bell. A little door was opened and the prison swallowed me up.

CHAPTER XIV

Reception Formalities—A Huge Stone Box—Cell No. 27—Tormented by Cold—A Warder's Rebuke—Disgusting Prison Fare—My First Night in Prison—Touching Mural Inscriptions

THE RECEPTION-ROOM for arrested persons arriving at the prison is on the second floor. The custodian on duty, wearing the prison uniform of the Tcheka and armed with a sword and revolver, rapidly read through the papers my escort handed over to him and gave me two *questionnaires* to fill up.

While I was entering my name, year and place of birth, nationality, etc., on the form, prisoners were passing in and out of the room the whole time. I was then much agitated, and have only a confused recollection of all the details of my earliest moments in prison. The majority of the prisoners belonged to the educated class, to judge from their exterior and manners.

Agitated as I was, I nevertheless looked very carefully at the *questionnaire*, and, noticing the questions—(a) what are you charged with? (b) has the indictment been presented?—I simply put a mark against them. When my turn came, a guard led me up to the custodian. Again I was closely searched. My money, watch, and safety razor were taken away from me, but I was given a receipt for them.

The custodian looked at the form and asked me why I had not stated the cause of my arrest. I replied that I did not know the real cause of my arrest. "Well, never mind, you'll soon find out," said the custodian quietly, and gave directions to a boy of fifteen or sixteen, in semi-military uniform, as to where he was to take me.

We descended a staircase on the right-hand side of the corridor and passed through a latticed ironwork door at which a sentry stood. On the lower floor we passed another sentry by a barred partition and went down a very long, dimly lighted passage. It was very cold. We went down a few steps from this passage and turned to the left.

A long passage lay before me, so high that its ceiling was lost in the darkness. On the right were two windows with darkened panes, on the left an endless row of doors, of wood covered with iron. Above the row of doors on the first floor—which in reality was the first floor above the basement—ran another row of similar doors, above them another, and so on—five tiers in all. Each tier was bounded by a narrow iron gallery with open-work railings. From several points in the gallery narrow iron staircases descended. A profound silence reigned in the corridor, and our steps echoed through the monstrous stone box.

"Receive the prisoner!" my conductor called in ringing tones.

A thin little man, in a soldier's grey uniform with a belt round it, ran down one of the staircases and took me to the third gallery. We went into a small room like a store-room, with no windows, dimly lighted by an electric bulb. All kinds of rubbish lay on the shelves along the walls. An elderly man in prison uniform sat at a table under the electric light. He looked at me placidly through large horn spectacles, took the papers from the warder, and began to study them in silence.

"Undress," he said to me, in the tone in which doctors usually speak.

I took off my ulster and overcoat and looked at him expectantly.

"No, no; undress completely—strip."

"What for?" I asked in astonishment.

"Because, my dear sir, it is my duty to search you thoroughly. Do you understand?"

It was diabolically cold in that store-room, and the old man, as though on purpose, felt every seam of my clothing and linen with horrible slowness and minuteness; he even cut out the inner soles of my shoes. When he had concluded the examination he said placidly:

"Dress. Leave your braces and tie here."

I dressed as best I could and went down to the first floor, or "half-basement", accompanied by the warder. We stopped before a door marked No. 27. The warder opened the door with a clang and a rattle, and said curtly, indicating the cell

with a jerk of the head: "Go in." The door was shut, and for the second time the key turned in the lock with a clang.

I was locked up in a prison cell for the first time in my life, and I felt that all that had gone before had been but a prelude to my sufferings.

The cell was very dirty, as far as I could see in the faint light that found its way through the dusty basement window with its thick iron grating. The asphalt floor was completely covered with a thick layer of dirt and all the walls were scribbled and drawn over.

Along the right wall an iron frame, with criss-cross iron bars, was screwed to the floor. This was apparently meant to serve as a bed. Opposite the bed, on the other side of the cell, were an iron table and seat, likewise screwed to the floor. Just to one side of the table a small wash-stand was let into the wall. It was very curiously constructed; to make water run from the tap, I had to press a long wooden lever the whole time with my left hand. Beyond the wash-stand, in the corner, was a w.c. with waste pipe.

Between the wash-stand and the table I perceived a long, thin, vertical radiator for steam heating. But alas! it was as cold as ice.

The cell was unbearably cold, and during the search I had become so cold that my teeth chattered. It was probably about four in the afternoon. In my inexperience of prison life, I expected that someone would come in a moment, turn on the heating, and bring me a mattress and a rug. But an hour passed, and no one appeared. From time to time, in the profound silence, the rattle of keys could be heard in the corridor, the banging of doors, or the cry "Receive the prisoner!" as though uttered by the mouthpiece of a gramophone.

I ran about the cell to warm myself, and did motions with my arms until I was all covered with perspiration. Then I sat down to take breath on the iron seat, which was colder than ice.

Oh, that accursed cold! I am grateful to it *now*, for I owe it to the cold and other bodily torments that I kept my reason. My

physical sufferings were so unbearable that my mental sensations were deadened.

When I had sat down for a quarter of an hour at most, I had to start running again till I began to perspire afresh, and so it went on all the time. I could hear some unhappy prisoner running and stamping his feet in the cell above mine.

At last, completely maddened by the cold, I resolved to call somebody, and began to kick and knock on the door. The little shutter, which closed the opening made in the centre of the door for handing in food to the prisoners, was opened noisily and the head of the corridor warder was thrust into the square gap.

"What are you making such a noise about, citizen? You've got to behave quietly, *like a gentleman*. What do you want?"

"Give me a rug and a bed, and turn on the heating."

The head opened its eyes wide with astonishment and, quite unexpectedly, gave a real laugh.

"So you think you're in a hotel, do you, citizen? There's no heating here—this is the 'special floor'. Nobody is given a rug. I'll bring a mattress when I put the cell in order."

The shutter was slammed to again.

So it came out that I had been placed on the "special floor", and I had to expect that its régime would be applied to me with the greatest severity. Alone, in a stone box, without the law, completely at the mercy of the Tcheka! What should I do? What could I do between those bare stone walls? My brain worked madly. But outwardly I was stiff with cold; so the endless running began again, six steps down the cell and three across it.

It had grown quite dark in the cell; my legs were sinking under me from weariness; the sweat made my neck disgustingly cold, and my short rests on the icy cold seat, leaning against a wall covered with frost, gave me no relief.

It must have been about seven o'clock when the shutter was opened and the warder held out to me a rusty tin soup-plate, a broken wooden spoon, and a piece of black bread.

I had absolutely no desire to eat. In a few minutes the shutter

was opened again and the warder stretched out his hand to receive the soup-plate.

"Supper," he said.

The soup-plate—as far as I could see by standing on the seat of the w.c. and holding the plate up to the dim light of the window—was filled almost to overflowing with a grey liquid which smelt horribly. I immediately poured the whole contents into the w.c. and flushed it with water several times to get rid of the disgusting smell of the putrid codfish and rancid sunflower oil.

Twenty minutes later a large tin jug was handed to me through the opening with the words, "Boiling water!" This was just what I wanted. The boiling water burnt my lips, but inside me a pleasant warmth ran through my whole body. I drank a few sips, and then placed the jug on the table in order to cool the boiling water a little. It was quite dark in the cell. When I raised the jug to my mouth I noticed that it had become peculiarly light. I found that the jug leaked and that all the hot water had run out.

At nine the lock of the door rattled, an electric light was turned on in the cell, and the warder appeared, bringing a straw mattress, or rather a large sack stuffed with straw. It would have been better if he had not turned on the light, for the mattress proved to be so dirty that the very thought of going to bed revolted me. There was no pillow. The warder switched off the light and went out, rattling the key in the lock.

It is useless to describe my first night in prison, for I could write nothing that would not be tame compared to the reality. All night long I did nothing but alternately run about the cell and fall exhausted on the dirty, evil-smelling mattress. Then I spread my ulster over my face and endeavoured to warm myself with my own breath. Thus I dozed off into a brief half-slumber. Now and again, in the nocturnal silence of the corridor, I heard hysterical cries; all night long doors were slammed in one direction or another, and several times the metallic call "Receive the prisoner!" was uttered. During my long period of

service at sea I had all kinds of adventures, but that first night of mine in prison I shall never forget.

About six o'clock in the morning the door was opened and the warder held out a skinny broom to me, saying: "Sweep up." The uttering of this curt phrase was apparently considered a sufficient tribute to hygiene, for I had only had time to make a few strokes with the broom when the warder said: "That'll do. It's not for a ball."

Soon afterwards bread was served out and boiling water brought. Although I had asked the warder to change my jug, this had not been done, and I had to plug the holes with scraps of bread. This enabled me to drink a quarter of the contents of the jug. In order not to give the warder further cause for laughter, I did not ask for sugar or tea, as it was obvious that they were not provided. After the hot water I thawed somewhat and, in my boredom, began to read the mural literature in the dim light. Of the inscriptions dated since 1917 few were at all cheerful reading.

Tell the family at 24 Ivanovskaja Street that Dr. Apturoff has been shot.

Sergei, Ivan, and Prokhov Khrapovy have gone west. Inform 40 Petrovskaja Street, Kursk.

There were many others like these.

I read most of these inscriptions. All the walls were ornamented with them. They dated from 1918 until April 2, 1924, so that the last inscription had been written two days before I was placed in cell No. 27. This last inscription was scratched on the window-sill with a piece of wire broken off from the plug of the w.c. A short time afterwards I found that piece of wire in a corner. The two specimen inscriptions quoted above I have reproduced from memory, and it is possible that the addresses are wrongly given; but the last inscription I remember exactly. Here it is:

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. The Archimandrite Antony, of the Alexandro-Nevisky monastery, is to be shot to-night for refusing to burden his conscience with a grievous sin. Forgive them, Lord—they know not what they do. Good people, tell my brethren. I leave this world with peace in my soul.

The inscriptions alternated with crosses, under which were dates and names. In the near corner of the cell was an image of Saint Seraphim Sarovsky, drawn with indelible pencil. The image was movingly drawn—by a naïve, unskilled hand, but all the details of the drawing were carefully executed, and it was signed thus:

Ekaterina, the servant of God, drew this image, thinking of her little children, who are praying to the just God for their mamma. January 1924.

In several places on the walls and on the window-sill were patterns formed of letters of the alphabet, arranged in five rows. Under one of these patterns some altruist had written instructions, showing how this alphabet could be used for conversation through the wall by means of knocking.

In the intervals of running about the cell I began, from sheer boredom, to study the numbering of the letters and practise forming different words in cipher. The position of each letter was determined by two single numbers; the first number indicated the position of the letter in the horizontal row, the second number its position in the vertical row. The end of each word was indicated by a sharp double rap.

This alphabet is used in all the political prisons of Russia. I foresaw clearly how convenient it would be to me in the future, and resolved to learn it as quickly as possible.

The difference between the contents of inscriptions dating from the pre-Revolution epoch and those of the present day is most characteristic. While the latter are impregnated with mysticism, profound spiritual trouble, and submission to fate, the pre-Revolution inscriptions testify to an entirely different mood in their authors. This is comprehensible when one remembers that until 1917 the overwhelming majority of the prisoners were immoral, criminal persons, who expressed their tastes and inclinations in dirty jokes and pornographic drawings. A few political prisoners, a very small group, were the only educated people in the prison; their inscriptions tell of youthful zeal, bravado, and an implacable spirit. This, too, one can under-

stand, for their youthful enthusiasm was kindled by a struggle for an ideal, greatly exaggerated as were the complaints of governmental tyranny and cruelty in those days. If anyone doubts this, I should recommend him to go through even a hundredth part of what I went through, and saw with my own eyes, in the territory of the Union of Soviet "Socialist" Republics.

CHAPTER XV

A Good-natured Warder—Three Days on Bread and Hot Water—Summoned to Examination—Total Darkness Torture—Rapping Conversations—The Tagantseff "Plot"—Riddle of My Arrest

ABOUT TEN O'CLOCK in the morning the section director on duty came into the cell: not the old man who had searched me so closely, but a young man, tall and pleasant-looking. There had apparently been a general relief of officials on duty, for the warder was new too, and he also was very pleasant.

The director said good morning to me, and added jokingly:

"Welcome! It's all right; don't be down-hearted. You'll probably be let out soon."

"I don't know whether I shall be let out soon or not, but while I'm waiting to be let out I may easily die of cold here. Couldn't you possibly move me to a larger cell?"

"That's not my affair. My duty is to guard you."

The director and warder left the cell. Soon afterwards the shutter was opened and the warder's head was thrust through.

"I don't think you're a Russian, are you? Where do you come from?"

I satisfied the warder's curiosity. I then offered him a cigarette and complained of the cold, the dirty mattress, and the leaky jug.

"All right! We'll fix you up somehow."

With these words the warder opened the door, took the dirty mattress and all my elementary utensils, and went out.

An hour and a half later I had two straw mattresses, one quite new and thick and the other obviously old, for it was much flattened. On the advice of my good genius I put the new mattress on top of the old one, to avoid misunderstandings when the director made his round.

That warder was a good fellow, and if he had not been, God knows how I could have endured my long stay in that refrigerator of a cell.

Till dinner-time I lay under my mattress, wrapped in my overcoat, with my ulster spread over my face. Dinner was no better than yesterday's supper, but this time the stinking codfish was cooked with rotten cabbage and potatoes instead of with a filthy gruel. I swallowed two or three spoonfuls of this incredible abomination; the rest I poured away as before. When the boiling water was brought, I drank the whole jugful and ate my bread. This warmed me, and I went to sleep under my mattress.

Again I left my supper untasted, but drank the boiling water and ate the bread. I felt completely shattered morally and physically.

Three days passed in this way. By the end of this time I had read every word of all the inscriptions on the walls, had learnt the telegraphic prison alphabet perfectly, and had acquired some knowledge of prison routine. I suffered most mentally, and from the cold. As I could not overcome my repugnance to the prison fare, I was obliged to content myself with bread and hot water. My exhausted organism, therefore, felt the cold more keenly than ever, and the second mattress gave but little warmth.

At the end of the third day I was awakened in the middle of the night by the noise of the door being opened, and saw the warder, accompanied by a quite neatly dressed woman who held a slip of paper in her hand. The warder, reading from the paper, asked me:

"Are you Boris Leonidovitch Cederholm, Finnish subject?"

"Yes, I am."

"Go to be examined."

The woman and I went down long passages, turning back several times and descending stairs. Finally she took me into a little passage where it was very warm. Several doors opened on to the passage. The woman knocked at one of the doors, and, on receiving an answer, made a sign to me to enter.

The room was very small, with cork-lined walls, and the entire furniture consisted of a table and two chairs.

At the table sat Fomin, in a quite decent lounge suit. In

his eyes I read the unspoken question: "Well, have we made you a bit less stiff-necked?"

I returned Fomin's inclination of the head and, at his invitation, sat down opposite to him. Silence reigned for some moments. At last Fomin spoke. The following dialogue then took place:

F. Well, what about it? Do you confess your guilt?

I. Of what?

F. You know that yourself. The charge against you is that, knowing of Citizen Koponen's illegal proceedings, you not only failed to inform the proper authorities, but encouraged the activities of this gang who were dealing in contraband of war.

I. I have told you already that I know nothing about Koponen's private life.

F. Well, if I show you now a written statement of Koponen's, what will you say then?

I. I shall say that it is a shameless lie, and that I demand to be confronted with Koponen.

F. It's no use your being obstinate. Here's Koponen going to be released until the trial is held—perhaps as soon as to-morrow. But you'll have to stay in prison for the present. Will you speak?

I. I have already told you that I can tell you nothing about the matter, and that I have had nothing to do with any *provocateur* business, or any dealings in contraband.

F. As you please.

I. Can I inform the Finnish Consulate of all that has happened? You have no right to deprive me of my liberty. It is a monstrous piece of tyranny.

F. You can write an open letter to the Consulate. But it won't do you any good. If the Consulate asks us any questions, we shall say that you are charged with criminal dealings in contraband of war and that we cannot release you until the matter has been investigated.

I. Confront me with Koponen once, and I will prove to you that the charge is quite groundless.

F. You must allow us to think and act in accordance with our own judgment. Now you can go to your cell.

I. It's not a cell, it's a torture-chamber. You have no right to torture me with cold and starvation.

F. Don't they give you anything to eat? As for heating, there's none at all now, for we're getting on towards summer. Besides, you have only to help us to clear up the whole business and we'll put you on a modified régime and then let you out altogether till the case comes on.

He rang the bell; the escorting warder on duty appeared and took me back to my cell.

On the following day I asked for an open letter form and a pencil, and wrote a few words to the Consulate, informing them where I was and asking them to send me food, warm clothes, linen, and a rug.

I found out afterwards that none of the open letters I had sent had been forwarded to their destination; they had all been put into the file relating to "the case".

The same day, soon after dinner, I noticed that a shadow of some kind had fallen on the window. On looking into the matter, I found that a board had been fastened firmly to the window and that the whole rectangle of window was gradually being blocked by upright boards being laid across it. The cell was plunged in complete darkness, except for a ray of light which entered at the left-hand edge of the window, where a board had been placed against the window but not firmly fixed. This half-light illuminated only a few square inches on the left wall of the window embrasure, and that but feebly. The rest of the cell was plunged in total darkness.

I called the warder on duty, but, to my despair, he only said: "That has nothing to do with us."

I lived in darkness for a week. The light was turned on for half a minute in every hour, and then I saw the warder's eye looking through a small opening specially made in the door of the room and called a *glazok* (peep-hole). Then the light was turned off, the bolt of the peep-hole fell with a gentle click, and I was in darkness again.

The profound silence was broken at times by the hysterical cries of some prisoner, the nightly shouts of "Receive the prisoners", and the curt syllables spoken at regular intervals through the shutter in the door—boiling water, bread, dinner, supper, boiling water again. These were the only sounds of life which reached me in my icy, damp, dirty, dark vault.

No—there were other sounds which diversified my lonely existence, and perhaps I owe it to them that I did not go out of my mind during this time of torture.

I first began to pay attention to them one day when, maddened by the cold and worn out by spells of running about

the dark cell, I had sat down on my bed with one mattress under me and the other over me, and my neck against the wall.

I ought to say that my hearing is not perfect, as the result of a blow, and I had caught cold in the chilly cell, which had made it still worse. But I could hear every noise on the wall through my skull, and thus became aware that repeated raps were audible at intervals on the wall. A lively conversation in the prison "telegraph" language was going on. At first, owing to my inexperience, I could understand nothing, but I gradually began to distinguish isolated words, when, apparently, the prisoners who were knocking were beginners.

My neighbour to the left tried to get into conversation with me several times, but nothing came of it, for although I could distinguish isolated words, I missed a great deal. At last I myself somehow managed to rap out, losing count several times: "Speak slower; it is dark in my cell, I cannot take notes."

How I bless the prison alphabet and those timid, scarcely audible raps on thick prison walls, impregnated with human suffering! How many long hours of my life in that vault did I and my companions in misfortune while away thus! How many sufferers shared their experiences with me—people whom I never saw, and never shall see!

If only prison walls and heating pipes could convey to the world all the cries of despair and torment uttered by innocent people placed without the law, buried alive, who make those hardly perceptible knocks the expression of their misery and their lamentations!

You lean your head against the wall, or the cold heating apparatus, and begin to listen for the knocking of some "acquaintance". The word has a strange sound when one reflects that one's acquaintance with these people is entirely limited to this exchange of raps.

What do I hear? "27, 27, 27, 27! 63 speaking. 27, 27, 27! 63 speaking."

Aha! that is my neighbour on the floor above calling me. The conversation begins. . . .

I gradually became acquainted with all my neighbours,

above, to the right, and to the left. Our conversations, of course, were of a disjointed character, and contained nothing that could facilitate the work of the Tcheka examining judges. Cases occur now and then in which agents of the Tcheka are placed next door to some confiding prisoner; then, under the influence of solitude and nerves, a weak-minded man commits an indiscretion and, later, pays with his life for a minute's weakness.

All five storeys of our section were a so-called "special floor", and the storey above the basement, where my cell was, was called the "secret section" of the "special floor".

One of the invisible people I talked to was lodged straight above my cell, on the third floor. His name was Riedkozuboff. Before the Revolution he had been a barrister and a millionaire. He had been on the "special floor" for over a year already, on suspicion of being concerned in the so-called Tagantseff counter-revolutionary plot. More than two hundred people were in our prison on charges arising out of this case, and in Moscow, it was believed, even more. The whole case was being tried administratively, i.e. through the Tcheka. The investigation of the Tagantseff case was nearly concluded, and many of the persons involved had therefore been placed in the common rooms of the prison—put on the modified régime, as it was called; but Riedkozuboff and a few others were still kept on the "special floor".

What I succeeded in ascertaining from the different prisoners was far from consoling. It appeared that in the secret section it was a usual thing to deprive the prisoners of light and the right to receive the so-called *peredatcha*, i.e. parcels of clothes, linen, and food from relations and friends. In the rooms on the "special floor", except in the secret section, it was light, and the prisoners were allowed to receive parcels, but not books or newspapers, nor were they allowed to take exercise. I might be kept in the secret section for a quite indefinite time, as the Tcheka counted on obtaining a full confession from the prisoner by means of this torture.

What did they want from me? I never believed for a moment

that all this ridiculous story about twopence-halfpennyworth of contraband, even what Fomin was pleased to call "contraband of war", could have caused me, a foreigner, to be arrested and submitted to such outrageous, inhuman treatment.

It seemed that the Tcheka, in taking the daring step of arresting me, had been impelled by some very weighty reasons. I worried myself to death, racked my brain in endeavours to solve the riddle; and I suffered unbearable moral and physical torments, to which I could see no end.

CHAPTER XVI

*Confronted with Koponen—Order for My Prosecution—A
Travesty of Justice—The Tcheka's Game with Koponen—
Koponen's Chivalry*

WHEN I HAD BEEN a week in prison, I was sent for again in the middle of the night to be examined by Fomin.

This time Fomin was not alone. With him sat the same gentleman whom I had seen at my last conference at the offices of the tanning syndicate. He clinked his spurs in an ironical salute and said: "We have met before."

Fomin hunted in his portfolio for a long time; then he pressed a bell-knob and gave the warder who appeared the curt order:

"Bring him in!"

Koponen entered the room. His aspect was horrible; his face was of a greenish pallor, with black rings round the eyes, and he could hardly stand.

At the sight of me he broke down altogether, and rushed towards me, crying:

"Boris Leonidovitch! My God, what are you doing here?"

Fomin was between us with one bound. He pushed the sobbing Koponen away and cried sharply several times:

"Silence! silence, I tell you! Answer my questions!"

I sat down, completely shattered by this sudden dramatic interlude, and Koponen, biting his fist to check his bursts of sobbing, felt for me all the time with his free hand, like a child.

Fomin made Koponen sit down on a chair in the far corner of the room, and said:

"Citizen Cederholm is accused of complicity with the gang which had dealings in contraband of war."

He was unable to finish his sentence, for Koponen, shaking with sobs, completely beside himself, screamed in a hysterical voice:

"How dare you? Murderers, blackguards! I told you twenty

times that he was innocent! He told me himself to return that cursed box!"

The room went round in circles before my eyes. Koponen was removed at once, and Fomin and his colleague both stared hard at me, leaning forward slightly. I was quite numb with horror, and had only one wish—that this examination, this moral torture, might be over as soon as possible.

But the torture had only begun.

Fomin broke the silence with the question:

"Well? Will you maintain now that you did not know that Koponen had relations with people engaged in the war contraband traffic?"

"I've nothing to say to you. You heard Koponen say yourselves that I am innocent, and that I advised him myself not to take charge of the box."

"In the first place, you are guilty of having known about the dealings in contraband and failed to inform the authorities, and even when interrogated by the organs of inquiry you obstinately refused to say anything."

Having said this, Fomin discussed some point with his colleague in a low voice and began to write something on a form. He filled up two forms and held them out to me, saying:

"Read and sign these."

My name, nationality, and the circumstances of my examination were recapitulated on the first form, followed by the examining judge's conclusion, the words of which were roughly as follows:

. . . in view of the fact that at a single confrontation of Citizen Cederholm with Citizen Koponen, the latter candidly admitted that Citizen Cederholm knew of the dealings in contraband, and Citizen Cederholm repeated this admission, I, Fomin, examining judge in cases of special importance, have ordered that Citizen Cederholm shall be kept under arrest as a measure of precaution until the trial.

The second form contained the following words:

In view of Citizen Cederholm's refusal to give evidence voluntarily in case No. 12506, and in view of the fact that at a single confrontation with Citizen Koponen, Citizen Cederholm confirmed the allegation that he was privy to the concealment of contraband of

war, I, Fomin, examining judge in cases of special importance, have ordered that Citizen Cederholm shall be prosecuted by virtue of Clause — of the criminal code of the U.S.S.R.

Having read these two "documents", I said to Fomin in a decisive tone:

"I will sign neither of these, for this is the most cynical travesty of justice and common sense that could be imagined. These documents contain such juggling with words, and the facts are so misrepresented, that one thing only is clear to me; for some reason it suits you best to keep me in prison. In such circumstances you have no need of my signature."

Fomin rubbed his hands with satisfaction, and said with a smile:

"That is as you please. The order has been communicated to you in the presence of the director of the counter-espionage section of the Petrograd Tcheka, Comrade Messing. We shall testify at once that the order has been communicated to you.

"You will have to remain in prison for two months until the trial, but I will transfer you to the modified régime. You will be moved to another cell on the 'special floor', and I will allow you to receive parcels. You can inform your friends of this in an open letter."

With these words Fomin summoned the warder to take me away. I was already at the door when Messing stopped me, saying:

"What was your relationship to the Finnish Consulate-General?"

"None," I replied. "I simply took premises in the house belonging to the Consulate and lived and had my meals with the whole Consulate staff. But I have nothing to do with the work of the Consulate. I am a purely private individual, the trade representative of a South American firm."

Messing smiled, and said with a nod:

"Well, for that matter, *now* we shall have time for further conversation with you. You can go for the present."

Not till I had reached my cell did I realize the full horror of what had happened to me. The noose flung by the Tcheka

had caught me by the neck, and it was clear that, for some reasons I could not understand, the Tcheka had taken a firm grip of me. Not for a moment was I stirred by the slightest feeling of reproach with regard to Koponen. The man's dreadful appearance told more eloquently than any words of all that he had had to go through from the moment of his arrest, and I knew from my own experience under what conditions he had been kept in prison.

The unfortunate fellow, having been reduced to a state of nervous collapse and become totally irresponsible for his actions, had been finally overcome at the sight of me in prison. My appearance too was probably dreadful, after I had lived for a week half-starved in a cold, dark cell. The whole scene which had taken place at my one confrontation with Koponen had made on me the impression that Koponen had never believed what Fomin had said about my arrest until he saw me. Apparently the examining judge had repeatedly tried to convince Koponen that I was suspected, owing to his denials, of a more serious offence than was actually the case. Koponen probably regarded all these declarations of the examining judge as an attempt by the Tchekists to entangle him, and did not for a moment believe, knowing me and the position I held, that the Tcheka would have the impudence to arrest me. When he saw me, therefore, he was sure that I had been imprisoned thanks to him and no one else, and had endeavoured, in the hysterical state he was in, to declare as convincingly as he could that I had had nothing to do with the contraband business, but quite the contrary.

This "quite the contrary" was just what the examining judge wanted, for it enabled him to keep me in prison.

I respect Koponen's chivalry and manliness, for he in particular had been set upon by the Tchekist *provocateurs* in order that it might be possible for them to lay hands on me. Consequently I was the involuntary cause of Koponen's arrest and further sufferings.

When, not long before his arrest, Koponen told me about the box he had concealed, I told him of my suspicion that the

Tcheka wanted to get hold of me. In consequence, when Koponen was in prison he would have had no difficulty in guessing that he had been involved in all his misfortunes by the force of circumstances and his proximity to myself. Despite this knowledge, the noble fellow endured horrible bodily and mental torment and made every effort not to bring me into the unpleasant business. I lay special emphasis on the words "unpleasant business", for Koponen might well suppose that a frank confession on his part could at the very worst only bring my name into some discredit by involving me in a silly contraband affair. Nothing more than this. Koponen could never have supposed that they would put me in prison. The confession which had escaped his lips, despite himself, with the good object of saving me, would not, in the long run, have made my position much worse. My strength was exhausted, and it is possible that a moment would have come when, reduced to the same state as Koponen, I should have surrendered.

The whole of this tragic farce over the contraband had lost all significance for me, for the main struggle was evidently still to come. I felt this intuitively, and guessed it by many signs. In a very short time, unhappily, my anticipations were realized.

CHAPTER XVII

Cell No. 92—Food and Clothes from the Consulate—Useless Petitions—I Catch a Chill—A Week in Bed—New Charge of Espionage—The Eternal Puzzle—Meeting with Prince Maksutoff

ON THE FOLLOWING MORNING—the tenth day of my imprisonment—I was transferred to cell No. 92. This room was on the second tier of the “special floor”, and its door opened into the iron gallery. The general arrangements and dimensions of my new quarters were the same as in my old room, but they were noticeably cleaner, and—most important of all—the room was light and somewhat warmer than in the “half-basement” tier. Perhaps there was not, on the second tier, that horrible damp which had made me so wretched in No. 27, where the walls were always covered with frost. Possibly spring had arrived, and it was warm out of doors. At any rate, the heating was not turned on in my new cell either, and towards evening I already regretted my “vault”, where I had had two mattresses to protect me from the cold. The first night in my new quarters I spent, as usual, in running about the cell at intervals, for it was unbearably cold. To ask for a second mattress was out of the question, as the warder on duty, Semenoff, the same who had originally installed me in cell No. 27, was a zealous minion, a formalist, and impenetrably stupid. But, despite all this, my transfer to cell No. 92 meant the modified régime, i.e. the right to receive presents, and I hoped to get all the necessities of life from the Consulate in the near future.

Two days passed. I had overcome my repugnance and “learnt” to eat the prison fare, and I was just about to consume the supper which had been brought me when I was summoned to the presence of the section director on duty. I expected no agreeable results from this summons. Accompanied by the warder, I ascended to the gallery of the third storey and entered the director’s little room, of which I had a vivid recollection.

The director asked me to sign a paper containing a list of

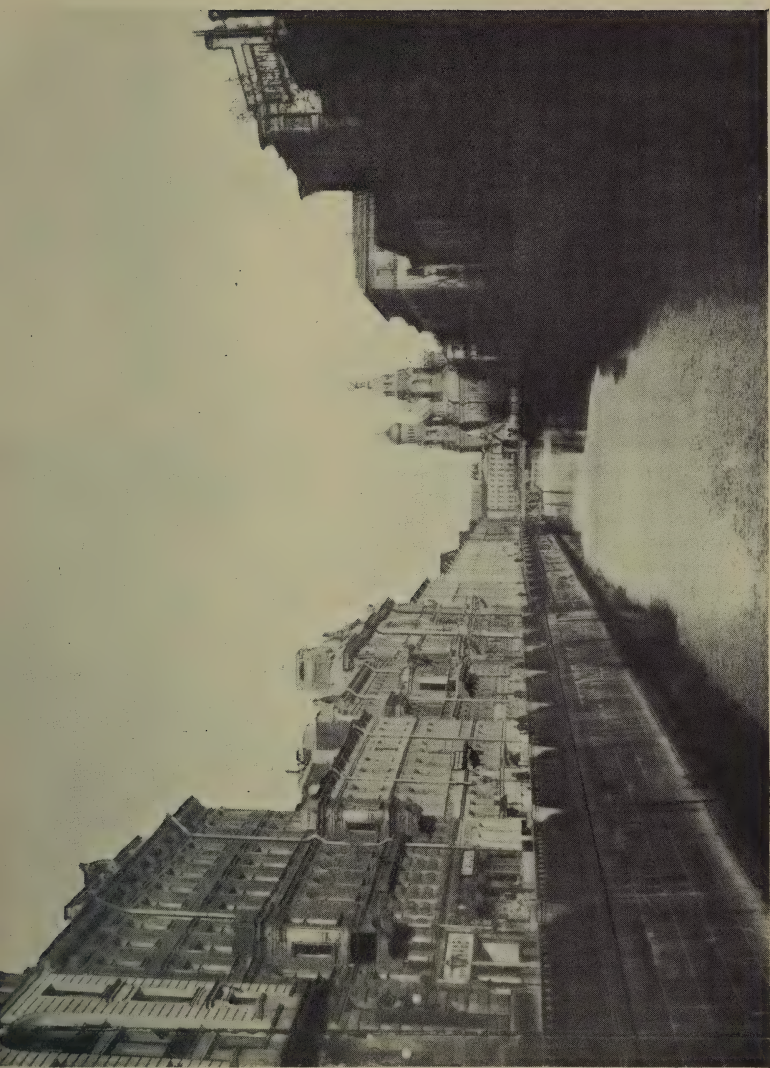
the food and other things sent to me from the Consulate. What, what had the thoughtful housekeeper of our house in the Ekaterinhofsky Prospect not sent me? The things that delighted me most of all were a thick woollen sweater, warm felt boots, a rug, a pillow, sheets, and woollen underclothing.

I took all my possessions to my cell, and first of all changed into warm clothes; then I made tea in the teapot that had been sent me. O joy! Now, when a pleasant wave of living warmth flowed through my whole body, I realized for the first time how weary I had been, and how nearly my strength had been at an end.

Good food, warm clothes, and normal sleep very quickly restored my strength, and I began to consider my situation, and seek for a way of salvation, with renewed mental activity. Alas! I had learnt from my exchanges of raps with various prisoners that but one possibility was open to me—to write a petition to the Chief Prosecutor of Petrograd and to the President of the Council of People's Commissaries.

At the moment when I write these lines, I am entirely unable to understand how my judgment could then have been so obscured that I could believe in the utility of these complaints and protests. Whatever the reason may have been, I was then convinced that my lengthy petitions and complaints of the tyrannous acts of the Tcheka would reach the heads of the Government and would secure my immediate liberation with apologies. My energy required an outlet, and I covered several sheets of large-sized writing-paper. I handed all that I had written over to the prison office through the director, supposing that the office forwarded everything to its destination.

I had caught a severe cold, my throat was inflamed, and I was coughing terribly. I asked to see a doctor; the *Feldsher*, or assistant doctor, came and left a small packet of powders, and that was the end of it all. Finally I collapsed, shivering with fever. The *Feldsher* came again, took my temperature, and gave me some more powders. When the thermometer showed 39.8° (103.6° Fahrenheit) the doctor came. He sounded me and said, shrugging his shoulders:



THE CATHERINE CANAL, PETROGRAD

"You've got a chill. You ought to put on warmer clothes. If you go up to 40°,¹ we'll send you to hospital. As long as your temperature is below 40°, I haven't the right to move you from your cell. This is the special floor."

My temperature would not go up to 40°, and I remained in bed in my cell. I completely lost count of the days, and have only a fragmentary recollection of this period. I was in bed for about a week, and my convalescence coincided with the receipt of new parcels. It had apparently become pretty warm in the courtyard, for my hands and ears no longer froze, and there were no longer icicles on my untrimmed moustache in the mornings.

I knew, from the sounds which reached me from the corridor and from the exchange of raps with my neighbours, that the prison was full to overflowing. There were as many as five persons in the cells next to and above mine, which proved that the prison was filled far beyond its real capacity. The prisoners on the "special floor" were supposed to be kept in complete solitude, and if the prison administration was keeping several persons in cells on the "special floor", it meant that even the "special floor", consisting of 240 cells, was chock-full.

The day after I had received my parcels a lean, fair-haired man, smartly dressed in prison uniform, came into my cell, sat down at the table, and began to examine some lists. Then he asked me:

"To which examining judge are you allotted, and under what clause are you charged?"

"I am allotted to the examining judge Fomin," I replied, "who has charged me with dealings in contraband of war. With whom have I the pleasure of speaking?"

The fair man smiled, looked me up and down, and replied:

"I am the assistant governor of the prison, and my name is Polikarpoff. You're not so badly off"—pointing to my thick rug and my store of provisions in the window embrasure. "Only you've not given me the examining judge's name correctly, for, besides Fomin, you are under the counter-

¹ 104° Fahrenheit.

espionage section as well. Haven't you really been charged with espionage?"

Polikarpoff's words completely astounded me, and I made no reply except to repeat his question with every sign of amazement. Polikarpoff made a marginal note on his lists, clinked his spurs, and departed.

I was filled with consternation by the awful news, and began to pace the room nervously. Plunged in reflection, I became entirely oblivious of my surroundings.

What a piece of devilry! And how cunningly they had worked it all! First of all they had sent their *agents provocateurs* to the unfortunate Koponen, they had then got hold of me and concocted a contraband "case". By this means they obtained full liberty to treat me as they pleased for a long time to come, for there was no risk of the Finnish Government intervening on my behalf in the near future.

What could my Government do to secure my release? I was a smuggler, and every Government in the world has the right to make war on smugglers. Not until my case had been judicially investigated could the Finnish Government take any definite steps towards my liberation. But when would that trial come off? And what sort of a trial would it be? As they had been shameless enough to accuse me of dealings in contraband and arrest me, what was there now to prevent them from telling our diplomatic representative that my case was very complicated and that the trial, on a variety of plausible pretexts, would have to be postponed? It was evident to me that they would do this. Now they had made a spy of me, and could accuse me of whatever they thought fit, seeing that I was now completely in their power. They could shoot me without trial as a spy at any moment, and so the contraband case got up by their *provocateurs* would never be tried at all, for the new espionage "case" would swallow it up.

All these considerations were quite clear to me, and only one thing still puzzled me—why they had got me into their clutches at all. I asked myself this question a thousand times, walking up and down my cell like a wild beast in a cage.

I knew of other cases. I knew that the Tcheka raged unceasingly. I knew that people were being shot by dozens daily without trial all over Russia and flung into prison at the rate of many hundreds a day. I knew that the tyranny of the Tcheka knew no bounds, and was becoming a positive disease. I knew all this, and in my indignation it did not occur to me to seek for any excuse for the whole nightmare business. But nevertheless I arrived at the explanation of the Tcheka tyranny: the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Revolution, the fear of losing its power over the masses, which impelled it to terrorize the masses by any and every means, and, finally, the low moral standard of the men in power.

All this, however, brought me no nearer to discovering why I, a foreigner, entirely unconnected with politics, had been chosen by the Tcheka as an object for its special attentions. I had behaved so cautiously while I was at liberty that the most morbidly suspicious person could not have seen anything resembling espionage in my activities. My coming to Russia and my stay in the country had had a purely commercial object. Certainly our negotiations had not been crowned with success, but the Bolsheviks themselves knew even better than I that I had not been the cause of their failure. On the contrary, the success of the negotiations would have held in prospect substantial material gains for myself, for I had an interest in my firm's profits. My arrest had made a stir and consequently injured the reputation of "Nep"; this was contrary to the interest of the Soviet Government, which was then endeavouring to make a show of negotiating with foreign business men.

At last I formulated thus what seemed to me the only possible solution of the riddle that had been tormenting my brain: the Tcheka evidently suspected that I had informed my firm of the actual position, and that my firm, through the position it held, had influenced public opinion in the country, and so the negotiations for the recognition of the Soviet Government had resulted in a fiasco at the very outset. This seemed to me to be the only at all probable answer to the riddle of my arrest.

I was aroused from my reflections by the noise of the door

being opened, and an elderly man with a beard, of immense stature, in an old officer's overcoat, was brought into the cell.

The giant emptied the contents of a canvas bag he had brought with him on to the floor, looked timidly round, and sat down on the iron seat, visibly out of breath. When he had regained breath, he bowed to me politely and said:

"Please don't pay any attention to me. I am all to pieces. I have just come out of hospital. I won't ask you any questions, and please behave entirely as if I were not here. It's very cool in your cell. My name is Maksutoff, Dmitri Petrovitch."

Still a prey to my whirling thoughts, and having grown unaccustomed to strangers, I behaved in a rather unfortunate manner to my new comrade. I remember that I said something in reply, but forgot even to tell him my name.

Maksutoff glanced at me several times, and I began to pace up and down the cell again.

"Excuse my importunity," he said at last, "but your face seems astonishingly familiar to me. But forgive me, for Heaven's sake; don't tell me if you'd rather not."

I apologized for my unintended discourtesy, told him my name, and added, after excusing myself again: "I am fearfully absent-minded, and have been alone all the time. One could easily go out of one's mind here."

On hearing my name, Maksutoff rose to the whole of his gigantic height and held out his hand to me with a friendly smile.

"My dear fellow," he said, "what a place Providence has fixed for us to meet again in! Don't you really know me?"

Then at last the cloud was lifted from my brain. Of course! Prince Maksutoff, who had once been a naval officer, and had then been transferred to the Preobrazhensky Bodyguard Regiment. I was some twelve years junior to him when he left the navy, but I had met him several times socially before the Revolution, and we had been on excellent terms. The Revolution and prison had so changed his outward appearance that one might easily fail to recognize him, the more so that neither

the place of our meeting nor my mental condition was of assistance in awaking recollections of past years.

We were both of us astonished and moved by our meeting, and Maksutoff kept on saying over and over again:

“Good God! to think that we should have met here!”

So I entered a new phase of my prison life; from henceforward I was never to be alone. Would it be more bearable or the reverse? I must “wait and see”.

CHAPTER XVIII

A Hysterical Cell-mate—Maksutoff's Terrible Position—The "Bribery King"—Danger of Dealings with Foreigners—A Student's Suicide—Messing Offers Tea and Cigarettes—A Duel of Words

ABOUT EIGHT O'CLOCK in the evening the warder brought into the cell two wooden trestles, a wooden frame, and a straw mattress. These were to serve as a bed for Maksutoff. This contrivance was placed right along the unoccupied part of the wall, behind my bed. Owing to his gigantic proportions, Maksutoff's feet were in contact with the outside wall of the cell, and his head projected far beyond the pillow. Seeing that he was lying all doubled up, I begged him not to hesitate to lay his head on my pillow, which drew from the warder the ironical comment:

"You're arranging yourselves like the double-headed eagle; shows you're regular *bourgeois*."

Maksutoff was suffering from acute neurasthenia. All night long he alternately walked about the room, wept, and talked to himself.

I was brimful of cares myself, and my nerves, I felt, were strained to the utmost. My fellow-prisoner's hysterical sobbing and sighing, and sometimes quite disconnected talk, prevented me from concentrating my thoughts. Perhaps this was really a good thing, for however much I thought, I could find no way out of my troubles. At times Maksutoff became calmer, and then it was possible to talk to him. I asked him no questions, and we talked mainly on "neutral" subjects—our past lives, the late war, and the material sufferings of the *déclassé* aristocracy and *bourgeoisie* in Russia. Maksutoff had been in prison for about two months, and had been kept for nearly three weeks in the secret section of the "special floor". At last he had fallen a victim to neurasthenia, had begun to shout and scream, and had been taken to hospital, where, he said, he was very comfortable.

As far as I could gather from single disconnected phrases which Maksutoff uttered, he had been arrested on suspicion of counter-revolutionary activities. A lady, the wife of a former brother-officer of his, had written to her husband, an *émigré* in Germany, asking him to get her a visa to enter that country. The letter was intercepted by the Tcheka, the lady was arrested, and with her all her acquaintances, even if their connection with her had been the remotest imaginable. Maksutoff was in a terrible position, for his arrest and its ultimate consequences meant that his young wife and their year-old baby would starve to death.

I obtained from what he told me the impression that during the last two years before he was imprisoned he had more or less reconciled himself to the new régime, and gradually reorganized his life on a new basis: one room with a common kitchen for all the occupants of the flat, wood-cutting every day, rolling cigarettes and selling them in small quantities, his wife occupied from morning to night giving French lessons dirt-cheap, washing, needlework, and cooking. The usual picture of supreme bliss for the *déclassé intelligentsia*—in Soviet Russia. But even this lamentable existence was destroyed, and Maksutoff found himself in prison for no other offence than that of having been born a prince and having served as an officer in the fleet and afterwards in the Preobrazhensky Regiment.

He repeatedly asked me, in a naïve manner, what I thought was in store for him. Of course I did all I could to tranquillize him, saying that it would all come to nothing. What could I say? Two days afterwards Maksutoff was sent for "with things", and I met him again eighteen months later in the Solovetsky Islands concentration camp.

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Soon after Maksutoff had gone a man in a short fur coat, with two suit-cases, was brought into the cell. He said to me jokingly:

"You don't mind my coming in without ringing the bell? What a nice little room you've got!"

It was evident at once that the new arrival was a cheery fellow and a man of experience. I laughed, and replied in the same vein:

"Yes, it's not a bad little place, only it's very dear. Are you coming to me for long?"

"God knows. I'm from 147. I was having a talk by raps with the man next me, who's in on the same charge as me. That scoundrel of a warder spotted it and transferred me here. Allow me to present myself—Pliatsky, otherwise known as the 'Bribery King'."

When I told him who I was, Pliatsky laughed delightedly, and said, pressing my hand:

"I'm very pleased to meet you. You're a colleague, so to speak—a business man—a Nepman, like me. I've been in with politicals all the time. Some fools of Social Democrats—they bored me with their idiotic talk. Let's have something to eat; my wife has sent me some fresh caviare, meat pies, and all sorts of things."

While unpacking a suit-case, Pliatsky chattered and joked unwearingly, and the whole of his appearance suggested anything in the world rather than an unfortunate prisoner. It appeared from what he told me that he was charged with giving bribes to various Soviet officials connected with the metallurgical industry. Over 150 persons had been arrested in connection with the "Pliatsky case", and the hero of the trial was called the "Bribery King" in the newspaper reports.

I cannot understand to this day from what source this man—one of those whom "Nep" had brought to the surface—drew his vigour and *joie de vivre*. What did he count on? His trial took place in 1926, nearly a year and a half after our meeting; he was sentenced to death, and more than twenty other persons shared his fate.

Towards evening two more men were installed in our cell—an engineer named Tchernoff, and Dr. P. The crush became fearful. The engineer was in a very nervous state; he had been

arrested in connection with the tanning syndicate affair, and might be sentenced to death. Dr. P., who wore military uniform, was surly, and on learning that I was a foreigner, had the *gaucherie* to say, quite unexpectedly and in a spiteful tone:

"The less you come to us, the better it will be both for us and for you."

Pliatsky and Tchernoff were visibly much embarrassed by the doctor's tactless remark, and he himself realized that he had overstepped the bounds of politeness, for he immediately held out his hand to me, saying:

"I beg your pardon. You will understand that my remark did not refer to you personally. I was arrested yesterday; my family are left at home without a kopek, and I have quite lost my self-control. It was on account of a foreigner that I was arrested myself."

Among the officers of the doctor's regiment, before the Revolution, had been a Pole, who had afterwards gone abroad. He had lately come to Russia from Poland as an official representative of some Polish organization. He was taken ill in Petrograd and, remembering his Russian friend Dr. P., naturally enough sent for him. The doctor visited the Pole several times during his illness. As happens at regular intervals, the Tchecha had recently "discovered" that espionage was being conducted on behalf of Poland, and their wide-flung net had entangled, among others, poor Dr. P. Every Soviet employee is compelled by Soviet law to inform his immediate superiors of all conversations with or visits to foreigners. Of course this regulation is not always complied with, for some think it safer for themselves to say nothing about occasional meetings with foreigners, and others disobey the rule simply from a comprehensible objection to delation. The doctor did not inform his superiors of his visits to his Polish patient, and now the unhappy man had to expect the most terrible consequences.

The room was packed and, the window being hermetically sealed, there was no ventilation.

Late that night, at three or four, I was sent for to be examined. I was conducted, not, as usual, to the corridor where the

examining judges' rooms were, but to the study of the prison governor.

How nerve-racking those nocturnal examinations are! I can fully understand that people with weak nerves and abnormally impressionable lose their wits completely in the long run and even calumniate themselves, simply to end this moral torture and to bring the whole business to a definite conclusion in one way or another.

The lights burned dimly; the long corridors, with their iron galleries hung in mid-air, were silent as the grave. Suddenly a stifled hysterical cry cut the silence like a knife. At a turning in the corridor the sound of a door being opened was heard, and my conductor stopped dead. Some of the prisoners in the secret section were being taken to or brought back from examination, and we must not see them.

We had reached the lowest tier, and had just passed my old cell, when I noticed a huge red stain on the asphalt floor, still wet, and diffusing a sharp smell of carbolic acid. This mark had been made by a student who had dashed himself to death by leaping from the fifth gallery. We were told by rapping that his *fiancée* had turned out to be an *agent provocateur*.

It was very pleasant and warm in the governor's study. It was a very large room, with rugs, comfortable leather arm-chairs, and heavy curtains; a lamp on the writing-table, under a green shade, threw a soft light.

Tea was laid on a little table, and Messing was comfortably extended in an arm-chair in an indolent pose, cigarette in mouth. On a chair beside him sat a feeble-looking young man with huge spectacles. On my appearance Messing made as if to rise from his arm-chair, and his neighbour got up, pointed to a chair, and invited me to sit down. I sat down. The young man lit a lamp with a reflector which stood on the small table, and arranged it so that the light fell right on my face. Messing broke the silence by offering me tea and cigarettes, but I refused the tea.

"In that case," Messing said in his Estonian-Russian, "we

will not lose valuable time, but will start our conversation at once. You are an experienced, intelligent, and, I think, astute man, and I hope we shall come to an understanding quickly. We won't put anything in writing to-day, as this is not an examination. I personally dropped in here quite by chance, but I had already decided to have a private talk with you. Will you tell me, please, what you know of the activities of the Finnish Consulate-General in Petrograd? You were in very close touch with the Consulate, and probably know a lot about the work of its staff."

I. I am not, and have never been, in the service of the Consulate, and the Consul did not tell me about service matters. I only had my meals with the Consulate staff and took an office in the house belonging to the Consulate. But I think I have told you that before.

M. Stop talking rubbish. Who will believe that you don't know anything? You have organized a regular system of espionage here on behalf of Finland and England. All the threads lead to you. How did you correspond with your firm? By post?

I. You're talking rubbish, not I. I corresponded by post.

M. It's not true. The whole time you have been in Russia three letters in all addressed to you were received at the post office, and their contents were of the most ordinary nature. How did you conduct your business correspondence?

I. I've told you already—by post. And what have my private affairs to do with you? You dare not keep me here; and who gave you the right to examine me?

M. Look here, Citizen Cederholm, you drop that tone and manner of speech. That's my advice to you. How did you conduct your correspondence with foreign countries?

I. I've told you already. Sometimes, by chance, I sent my letters by one of my countrymen who was returning to Finland.

M. By whom? Tell us the name of one of them.

I. I can't remember, and it has nothing whatever to do with you.

M. Be good enough to answer my questions; and, I tell you, change your tone.

(As he said this, Messing slapped the table with his hand and raised his voice to a high pitch.)

I. I advise *you* to change your tone. I am entirely in your power, and you can do what you like with me, but so long as I have command of my senses I will not allow anyone to speak to me in such a tone as you permit yourself to adopt. You have no right to shout at me.

M. (immediately lowering his voice). If you are convinced that we can do what we like with you, it is in your direct interest to be frank.

I. I have nothing at all to tell you.

M. You can go to your cell. You will be formally examined in a day or two. Till then stay in your cell and think it over.

All my three cell-mates were awake and awaiting my return, but I put them off with a few remarks of a general nature, for I cannot endure advice and expressions of sympathy from casual acquaintances.

The third week of my imprisonment came to an end, and I was sent for to receive parcels for a third time. As usual, the director on duty turned the parcels inside out, cut everything up and examined it most minutely. This examination of one's parcels by the director was horribly unappetizing. He investigated the interior of each meat pie with his dirty fingers, wiped his nose with them *en passant*, and proceeded immediately to examine ham and cutlets. He cut up rolls, butter, poultry, and meat with the same knife with which he cut up soap into small pieces.

I had not succeeded in getting my cargo into a state of relative orderliness, or of treating my room-mates, when I was summoned by the words, "Citizen Cederholm, with things".

I packed swiftly, and emerged from the room into the gallery loaded with my things. The door was slammed, parting me for ever from my cell-mates of a few hours. I was taken downstairs, and suddenly, to my horror, we stopped outside cell No. 24. Solitary confinement again!

CHAPTER XIX

*Solitary Confinement Again—Gymnastics Shock the Warder—
A Forbidden Word—New Examining Judges—Comedy of a
Revolver—More Puzzles—I Suffer from Hallucinations—
Bromide and its Effect*

CELL NO. 24 DIFFERED in no respect from its predecessors. It was very dirty, for, probably in accordance with established usage, the window was blocked up with boards, and darkness is not particularly conducive to careful sweeping. My anticipations in this respect were confirmed, for an hour had not passed since I entered the cell before the light square of window began to grow smaller, and finally the room was plunged in total darkness. As before, a board at the left edge of the window was loosely affixed, and a narrow strip of light faintly illumined the left-hand wall of the window embrasure.

With unintentional irony I compared my present sensations with those I had experienced the first time I was placed in solitary confinement. Then everything had amazed me and reduced me to despair. Now, made wise by prison experience, I was merely embittered, and all the mockeries and cruelties of my captors made but a faint impression on me. I do not presume to judge how an educated man ought to feel who is put into a dark stone box for a crime he really has committed, but I feel that, even if I had been conscious of any kind of guilt, and a means of mental reaction thus been available to me, I should have felt no repentance.

I had only one feeling—raging, irreconcilable hatred of my tormentors—and the thought that they could triumph over me drove me to desperation. It was probably this feeling, combined with my state of nerves, that caused my frequent explosions of anger and furious demonstrations, which now, when I look back on the past, I am with the best will in the world unable to justify, for they were sometimes of an absolutely childish description.

Thank Heaven, I was provided with warm clothing, a bed,

and food which, with careful management, ought to keep me for two or three weeks. This was of supreme importance at the moment, for I knew by experience that hunger and cold greatly reduce a man's powers of moral resistance.

From the moment of my arrival in cell No. 24 I firmly resolved to compel myself to eat the prison fare and to dole out my butter, sugar, salt, and smoked cabbage as economically as possible. I tied all these things up in two handkerchiefs and placed them between the window-frames. Perishable food I decided to eat at once. Thus I prepared for a "prolonged siege".

My rapping conversations with my neighbours above and to either side of me recommenced. I did gymnastics on the Müller system two or three times a day, and I shall not forget the warder's frightened face at the shutter when he suddenly turned the light on and saw me engaged in some break-neck exercise.

"What are you doing that for, citizen?" the warder Semenoff used to ask on such occasions.

"Don't you interfere, Comrade Semenoff. *Mens sana in corpore sano.*"

"What are you talking about, citizen? Good Lord, I shall call the director at once."

The director came, and I was asked the same question. I explained that I was doing gymnastics, and that if this was not permitted of course I would not do it. The director shrugged his shoulders and departed, but the uneasy Semenoff began to look through the "peep-hole" in the door and turn on the light more frequently than before.

One morning, not long before dinner-time, I began to sing an air from *The Jewess*. Semenoff's head was thrust into the room, and he asked:

"What's that, citizen?"

"A song from the opera *The Jewess*, worthy Citizen Semenoff."

"You must keep quiet, citizen. And look here, I shall report you for using that word."

"What word?"

"Why, that word 'Jewess'. Those words aren't allowed nowadays. Times have changed."

To relieve my boredom, I used to declaim verses in all the languages I knew, recalled the solutions of various mathematical formulæ, and I remember that for several days on end I gradually worked out the table of logarithms in my mind. I resolved not to think about my "case" at all, as it only agitated me and was of no use whatever. I thought only of how I should comport myself at the examinations, in order not to show by a single gesture that I was perturbed. Let "them" lose their tempers—my sole satisfaction for the present consisted in this. For the present; for I reckoned that the Finnish Government would by now probably have taken steps to secure my liberation.

On the fifth or sixth day of my stay in cell No. 24 I was summoned to examination. It was probably about midnight. Four men were sitting at the table in the examining judge's room, but, to my surprise, Fomin was not among them. Indeed, I never saw him again, nor did I hear, from the moment of my one confrontation with Koponen, a word about "contraband of war". All the four individuals seated at the table were visibly endeavouring to make themselves look ominous, and the result was terribly stupid. One of those who sat in the middle was in civilian dress. Those who sat on each side of the table were in frontier uniform.

I sat down opposite the man in civilian dress and asked:

"With whom have I the pleasure of speaking?"

The man in civilian clothes—a fellow of thirty or so, very insignificant and with an unintelligent face—raised his brows in a self-important manner, and said with dignity, in a sham bass voice:

"That is no concern of yours."

I laughed and said:

"But it is my concern—very much so. You know who I am, but I don't know who you are."

A man in military uniform sitting to the right, who looked like a Georgian or an Armenian, cackled with laughter and sang out cheerfully: "That's a good one!" The other comrades looked at him reproachfully. The man in civilian clothes, having apparently changed his mind, said to me:

"I am the plenipotentiary of the counter-espionage section of the Tcheka, Illarionoff. Answer my questions."

I. With pleasure, if I can.

ILL. Possibly also without pleasure. How did you conduct your correspondence with foreign countries? Through the diplomatic bag?

I. No. I have told you that a hundred times.

ILL. It's not true. We know all about your criminal activities. Your confession will lighten your punishment. You know what awaits you? You'll be shot.

At that moment the man who sat on the extreme left of the table—a tall, thin, pale young man, suffering from a nervous twitch of the head and the muscles of the face—took a "Para bellum" revolver from his overcoat pocket, looked at it, placed it on the table, and tried to spin it round on the table like a top.

The whole of this silly comedy, played in so utterly primitive a fashion by half-educated men, had become abhorrent to me. I turned to Illarionoff and said:

"In the first place, don't try to intimidate me, because it's ridiculous. You can't shoot me, however much you would like to, because I am a foreigner and the Consulate knows of my arrest. In the second place, ask your comrade to put away his revolver, for I will not say one word more while weapons are being spun round under my nose."

The Georgian's delight was complete. He slapped his chest with his hands, wagged his head, and uttered an eloquent, inimitable "V-v-a-a-ah!"

Illarionoff made a sign to the Tchekist who was playing with the revolver and turned to me again with the words:

"Nobody is trying to intimidate you. You overestimate your importance. Now, be kind enough to write down on this

sheet of paper the names of all the people you know in Soviet Russia, and Petrograd in particular."

I. I can't remember all at once. Let me do it in my room.

ILL. (after reflection). All right. But please tell me to whom you wrote a letter in French, addressed to No. 5 Pesotchnaja Street?

I (trying to remember). I recollect. Mr. B., a stockbroker.

ILL. And what did you write to him?

I. Nothing particular. I wrote that a sum of 2,700 gold roubles, which he had failed to pay over to me at the appointed date, must be paid without delay.

ILL. There, you see we know everything.

I. I see nothing surprising in that. It is most regrettable that you examine even local correspondence. I understand now why a local letter takes three days to reach its destination.

ILL. That's not your business. Now, who is Citizeness Artzimoff?

I. I don't know.

ILL. Well, perhaps you remember what you did in a flat at the corner of the Kronverksky Prospect and the Pushkarskaja Street? Were you often there?

I. I have never been there, and I don't even know where those streets are.

ILL. Think about it later on. Perhaps you will recollect.

Illarionoff then took from the Georgian a stout file with a blue cover, began to turn over the pages, and when he had found the page he wanted, asked me:

"Do you know Colonel Fenoult?"

I. Yes, I know him. He lives at Helsingfors, and is the representative of the Russian *émigrés* in Finland. But I know him very slightly. I don't move in *émigré* circles.

ILL. That's not true. You have been at Russian "evenings" for charitable purposes. What do you know of Colonel Fenoult's activities?

I. I have told you already that I know him very slightly. I believe he plays the piano at one of the cinemas. I know no further details of his life.

ILL. Aha, you see, you do know him, after all. And who is Major Gibson?

I. I don't know. I have never heard the name before.

ILL. And I suppose you know nothing about Bunakoff?

Not till I returned to Finland from Soviet Russia in 1926 did I find out who these two unknown persons were. I then learnt that Major Gibson had at one time been the British Military Attaché in Finland. I learnt of Bunakoff's existence in

1927 from Finnish newspaper reports of the notorious "British espionage" trial, at which the British were alleged to have organized a system of espionage in Soviet Russia.

I replied: "I have never heard the name Bunakoff."

"You can go to your cell," said Illarionoff. "I shall send for you to-morrow. Think it all over well. I sincerely advise you, in your own interests, to be frank."

The day after this examination the warder brought me a sheet of paper and an indelible pencil, in order that I might write down the names of all my acquaintances in Petrograd. It was a hard task. To name my acquaintances was to cause innocent people a great deal of trouble, but to refrain from naming them might be worse still for them; for the Tcheka, which already knew of the few people with whom I was acquainted, might arrest just those whom I left unmentioned.

The light was turned on in the room and the warder appeared every minute with the question, "Well, have you done?" At last I decided to write down only the names of the Soviet functionaries whom I had met officially, beginning with Krassin, and not to mention my other private acquaintances at all. The Tcheka could do as it pleased, but my conscience would be clear. I was not getting anyone else into trouble. I acted accordingly.

Several days passed. It looked as if they had decided to starve me out. My physical and mental condition had again become much worse. Pains in the region of the kidneys set in, and my nerves began to play me tricks. On the left-hand wall of the window embrasure, faintly illuminated through the chinks of the boards that blocked up the window, were patches of dirty, crumbling plaster. These patches gradually assumed, to my eyes, the form of faces dear to me, and at times these faces stood out as clearly as on a cinematograph screen. I took my eyes off the patches, persuaded myself with difficulty, by an effort of the will, that the whole thing was a pure hallucination, and promised myself not to look at the patches any more. When I was calm again, again I turned to the window, and it all began afresh. In the intervals

between the hallucinations my thoughts and reflections were perfectly normal, and when I recalled the hallucinations I was tormented by a fear that I was beginning to lose my reason.

In the conditions in which I was living, to have allowed my nerves to disobey me once would have meant losing all control over them afterwards. It was just as it is in an attack under a storm of fire from the enemy: so long as you only think of ordinary things, and compel yourself, by an effort of the will, not to think of the falling shells, all goes splendidly. But directly you begin to think of your personal danger, how hard it is to regain your mental equilibrium, how forced and affected your feigned calmness and bravado seem to those around you! In such cases the best thing to do is to tell yourself firmly that the end must come, anyhow, and the sooner the better. By thus condemning yourself to death, you regain your outward calmness, and your lost mental equilibrium gradually returns.

I must have begun to talk to myself, or some other signs of abnormality appeared, for the warder noticed it. One day the door opened and the doctor entered, accompanied by the assistant. At that particular moment I was comparatively calm, and answered the doctor's questions in a perfectly normal manner. An hour and a half after the doctor's visit a bottle containing a mixture was brought me. I tasted it, and realized that the doctor had sent me bromide. This so infuriated me that I called the warder and hurled the bottle out into the corridor, accompanying my action with appropriate expressions.

From that moment I regained my peace of mind.

CHAPTER XX

Scissors Solve a Mystery—My Explanation Accepted—An Embarrassing Reference—Illarionoff's Ink-pot—Brutal Treatment of Poorer Prisoners—Tcheka's Sham Propriety

I HAD THOUGHT CONTINUALLY of the mysterious "Citizeness Artzimoff" and the flat at the corner of the Kronverksky Prospect and the Pushkarskaja Street. I had never heard the "citizeness's" name or address before, but from the diabolical tone of voice in which the examining judge pronounced them to me, it was to be supposed that the centre of gravity of my whole "case" lay in my answer to that question. Rack my brain as I might, I could not recall any such person.

My nails had grown very long during my imprisonment, and having nothing to cut them with, I asked the warder to bring me scissors. He brought me a horrible, rusty pair of scissors, with the ends broken off to make them harmless. The warder turned on the light and waited by the open door till I had finished operating on my nails. While engaged in this innocent occupation, I remembered that I had injured my hand in January in a figure-skating competition and for some time had been unable to attend to the nails of my right hand.

On the advice of a fellow-countryman of mine, I employed the services of a girl manicurist in one of the big hairdressing establishments in the Nevsky Prospect. Recollecting all this, I also recollected how one day, when both departments of the hairdresser's shop—men's and women's—were crammed, my manicurist had asked me to take a seat in a room which led from one department to the other, and as I was in a great hurry, she had begun to attend to my nails on the spot. As I sat watching the stream of customers enter, I noticed a very handsome woman, middle-aged, whose face seemed familiar to me.

As she passed the little table at which I sat the lady looked closely at me, and I saw her face assume an expression of

astonishment and joy. It was my old friend Mrs. Artchakoff, the wife of an old brother-officer of mine in the Imperial Fleet. I had not seen her for twelve years; we were delighted at meeting again, and hurriedly bombarded one another with questions.

How often have I made myself promise not to ask my Russian friends about their lives during the years of revolution!

That brief interlude of five minutes had sufficed for Mrs. Artchakoff to tell me the whole of her sad story. Her husband had died in prison at Kharkoff in 1920. In the same year her little girl had died of exhaustion caused by hunger. Mrs. Artchakoff herself, after much suffering and privation, had returned to Petrograd; she had a post in some branch of the administration and lived with her married sister. Our conversation was interrupted, as she was in a hurry to take an unoccupied place in the ladies' department. She said to me as we parted: "Look here, I shall count on your coming to see me."

Fearing that I should forget her address, she went to the cash desk and wrote the name of the street and the number of the house on a scrap of paper. We took leave of each other; I put the piece of paper containing the address in my pocket-book and went about my business. My affairs subsequently took such a turn that I completely forgot the meeting, and when I remembered it I could no longer find the address: I had apparently lost it.

The whole affair recurred to my mind as I cut my nails with the blunt prison scissors in the dimly lighted room. Of a sudden the truth flashed across my mind: "Artchakoff, Artchakoff, Artzimoff, the corner of the Kronverksky and the Pushkarskaja. . . ."

I did not know in what part of the city the Kronverksky Prospect was, but I remembered that Mrs. Artchakoff had told me she lived somewhere in the Kamunnoostrov district. Unfortunately, I had totally forgotten the address she had written down for me.

When I was summoned to examination I sat down in front of the examining judge Illarionoff, thinking all the time of this

mysterious lady called Artzimoff. After the usual commonplace remarks, I asked the examining judge:

"Will you tell me, please, in what part of the town the Kronverksky Prospect and the Pushkarskaja Street are?"

"Why do you want to know that?"

"Because I think I could answer the question you put to me the other day."

Illarionoff satisfied my curiosity, and the riddle was solved: "Artzimoff" was a distorted version of the name Artchakoff, and all the rest was simply explained.

There had evidently been a secret agent of the Tcheka among the employees of the hairdressing establishment; he had listened to my casual conversation with Mrs. Artchakoff and reported it to his chiefs on the chance of its proving of value; but he had distorted the lady's name. The information was entered to my "account", the agent having probably ascertained my name from the girl manicurist. It is possible that the manicurist herself was the secret agent of the Tcheka. When I was arrested, all the material concerning me was gone through and noted at the Tcheka offices, and the meeting with Mrs. Artchakoff immediately acquired a peculiar significance in their eyes.

I saw at once that my explanation of the circumstances in which I had met Mrs. Artchakoff completely satisfied and at the same time disappointed Illarionoff, for he asked me no more questions at all about Mrs. Artchakoff or the Kronverksky Prospect.

The general aim of all Illarionoff's questions was to force me from my position, so to speak, and convince me that the Tcheka possessed material which compromised me beyond all possibility of denial. He several times mentioned to me the names of foreign diplomatic representatives accredited to the Finnish Government and insisted that I had relations with them. Sometimes he read from his file the names of Russian *émigrés* living in Finland, Berlin, and Paris, and insisted on my throwing light on the activities of these persons, of whom I knew nothing at all.

His questions were punctuated with the invariable exhortation:

"It's no use your being obstinate. We have incontrovertible evidence against you. I sincerely advise you to confess. Think of your unfortunate family."

My last examination by Illarionoff, which took place a week after that which I have just described, was marked by a comical incident.

After all kinds of terrifying questions, Illarionoff, examining the list of my "acquaintances" which I had written out, said:

"You understand perfectly well, Citizen Cederholm, about what acquaintances we were asking you. The people you name are those whom you met on official business. Had you really, during a stay of eight months in Petrograd, no acquaintances at all except business and official connections? You must have kept in touch with your former brother-officers."

I replied to the examining judge that probably very few of my brother-officers were still alive, and that the few who survived avoided any conversation with me when they chanced to meet me in the street. At that moment I recalled my former brother-officer L., at whose flat I had dined and who had so astonished me by his luxurious manner of life. I felt that I should like to confirm my suppositions concerning him.

"Now I come to think of it," I said, "I was once at the house of an old brother-officer. It was L."

Illarionoff did not even take the trouble to make a note of the name I had mentioned. He obviously did not wish to ask me for details, and immediately turned the questions on to an entirely new plane. My mention of L.'s name would, if followed up, have led to my meeting with the Polish plenipotentiary Tch. being mentioned also, and would finally have caused L. himself to be brought into the Polish espionage trial. This formed no part of the plans of the Tcheka.

I had heard about the Polish espionage case a short time before my arrest, and knew something about it through rapping conversations with my neighbours.

Wearied to death by the stupid and utterly boring ques-

tions of the examining judge, and in a very nervous state owing to the pains in my kidneys which I had now begun to feel, I said to Illarionoff:

"Will you let me walk about the room a little? It will make it easier for me to answer your questions. I have begun to feel pains in my kidneys."

I walked up and down the room, from the window to the door, and parried the examining judge's questions. When I stopped by the window, I had a fleeting glimpse of the street below, lighted by an electric lamp. It was probably four o'clock in the morning, and the light of the lamp was blended with that of the early spring dawn. New thoughts came into my mind despite myself, and I probably failed to hear a question from the examining judge, for I was aroused from my reflection by a very sharp ejaculation. This outburst, the pain in my kidneys, and my interrogator's foolish questions, caused me to lose my habitual calm. Quite forgetting myself in my excitement, I stamped on the floor, banged the table with my fist, and expressed my opinion of Illarionoff and his chiefs, probably in very definite terms. Illarionoff seemed at first to be taken aback by my sudden explosion of anger. Then he drew the ink-pot towards him and said:

"You didn't understand me. I didn't mean to shout at you. Look here, you're dropping your cigarette ash into my ink-pot all the time, and making it impossible for me to write."

It appeared that in the heat of my anger, while banging on the table with one hand, I had with the other, quite mechanically, dropped the ask of my cigarette into the ink-pot.

From my many conversations with different examining judges of the Tcheka I received the impression that courteous, quiet manners, combined with firmness and decision, had an undoubted effect on these half-educated men.

I was repeatedly a witness of the shocking brutality with which the examining judges treated prisoners who were Soviet citizens, in particular Jews. Faces all smashed and bleeding from blows, teeth knocked out with a revolver butt, and filthy

cursing were quite ordinary features of an examination. If I had not with my own eyes seen prisoners return from interrogation so battered that they were unrecognizable, I should never have believed their stories, so entirely contrary was such a thing to my own experience. I cannot and do not wish to generalize, but it is only just to say that *those* Jews and *those* Soviet citizens whom I saw in prison, bearing the marks of brutal handling after examination, were far from being chosen children of our Heavenly Father. People of genuine culture and education, of whom there are an enormous quantity in the Soviet prisons, are shot in multitudes, and transported in multitudes to places where they die of exhaustion, but I never saw or heard of their being knocked about or cursed.

Incidentally, this same Illarionoff, after one of the examinations, said to me:

"I hope you have no complaint to make of any impropriety in our treatment of you?"

I was so astonished by this piece of cynical hypocrisy, that for the moment I could not find a word to say.

Illarionoff apparently misinterpreted my silence, and put his question in a clearer form:

"Perhaps the lower prison employees treat you improperly in some way or another?"

I could contain myself no longer, and told Illarionoff just what I thought of the "propriety" of applying such a term to a man wrongfully imprisoned in a dark, cold cell, deprived of the right to receive parcels, threatened with shooting, endlessly interrogated, and so on.

Illarionoff listened quietly to all I had to say, and then remarked:

"You're talking of something quite different. You yourself refuse to give proof of your innocence, and the dark cell, the cutting off of parcels, and so on are part of the regular discipline. You are accused of such serious offences that it is impossible to give you the least opportunity of communicating with the outer world. That is the law. The investigation is coming to an end—then the régime will be changed."

After the comical ink-pot episode I never saw Illarionoff again. For a long time I was left in peace in my dark vault, and I formed the impression that either I had been forgotten or that they counted on reducing me, for some object I did not comprehend, to a state of complete moral and physical exhaustion.

CHAPTER XXI

In a World of Dreams—Brought before Dzerzhinsky—A Misunderstanding—False Hopes—Three New Charges—An Insulting Proposal—I Run Amok—A Rebellion without Consequences

IN MY SOLITUDE I at length lost count of the days. If the hours of the day had not been differentiated by the regular distributions of bread, I could not possibly have told the day from the night.

It must have been full spring by now out of doors, for the walls of my cell were no longer covered with frost and it was so warm that I could sleep undressed, with only a rug over me.

The solitude and the grave-like silence are at first unendurable. But one gradually grows accustomed to it, and becomes completely immersed in a world of dreams and memories. I could lie on my bed for hours on end, entirely oblivious of my surroundings, and review my past life, minute for minute. There rose before my eyes, as though alive, images of the past which had long, long ago vanished from my memory, and which in the bustle of daily life I never recalled. The tiniest, most trivial occurrences of my past life, in my silent, solitary hours of reflection and introspection, suddenly and unexpectedly became of immense significance. Now, when removed from these events by many long years, I began to see them in an entirely new light. Only the man who has been through a long period of solitude, in which he feels himself buried alive, and his body and mind by force of circumstances have no occupations to distract them, knows how inexhaustible are the depths of mental introspection.

Some insignificant detail among the events of our life, some empty phrase or gesture even, seems to have had a decisive effect on the entire course of one's life.

The weaker I grew physically, the more easily I endured my loneliness and, paradoxical as it may seem, the less I felt my bodily deprivations.

All this time flitted rapidly past my eyes, and when I was

again summoned to the prison governor's study for examination I was astonished to see "27 May" on the calendar which hung on the wall.

A worn-out, exhausted man looked at me out of the great oval mirror, with tangled, untidy hair and—a grey beard! It required a mental effort to realize that it was my own image.

In addition to Messing, a tall middle-aged gentleman, with a sickly face, very quietly and neatly dressed in civilian clothes, was in the study. Both Messing and the other man were sitting at the table, on which lay a few papers and documents.

The face of Messing's companion was vaguely familiar to me, and he, probably noticing that I looked hard at him, said with a faint smile:

"Don't you recognize me? My name is Dzerzhinsky."

I recollected at once that I had seen that face hundreds of times in innumerable newspapers, and Dzerzhinsky was evidently convinced that he was a well-known figure. And no wonder! For was he not the Lord High Executioner of All the Russias, the signer of hundreds of death-warrants daily, the creator, inspirer, and head of the Tcheka?

Dzerzhinsky, to my eyes, did not make at all a formidable impression. His little beard, at which he plucked gently with his fingers all the time, emphasized still further the sickly thinness of his face, and he blinked short-sightedly in the lamp-light. He sat slightly bent forward, and drummed on the table with the long white fingers of his free hand. Looking at his white hand, wasted by ill-health, I could not help thinking how often those fingers had pressed the butt of a revolver and shot down his unhappy victims point-blank.

Dzerzhinsky said to me in an expressionless voice, lisping slightly when he pronounced the letter "I":

"Lying won't help you. It never helped anyone yet. I happened to be here, and Comrade Messing spoke to me about you. I want to have a look at you. Confess, and we'll 'liquidate'¹ you quietly. You understand? Quietly."

¹ To "liquidate" a person usually means, in Tcheka language, to execute him. See Chapter II.

I probably did not understand the words "liquidate you quietly" in the sense in which Dzerzhinsky meant them. Supposing that they were threatening to shoot me without trial, I said:

"You cannot possibly liquidate me quietly. The Finnish Consulate knows of my arrest."

Then Dzerzhinsky, turning to Messing, asked in a tone of surprise:

"But you didn't catch him on the frontier, did you?"

Messing replied hastily:

"No, he came here with a visa, as an agent."

Dzerzhinsky reflected for a moment and then said:

"Well, it's all the same in the long run. It makes no difference whether the Consulate knows of your arrest. We will make arrangements so that the whole thing can be liquidated quietly, without any fuss."

I still failed to understand the true significance of Dzerzhinsky's words, and again said as emphatically as possible:

"You won't succeed in liquidating me quietly. There will be a tremendous sensation. According to the Treaty of Dorpat you have no right to shoot a Finnish citizen, much less without trial. Finland certainly will not go to war on my account, but it's not Finland, or war, that is the point: the point is that all the foreign papers will make an outcry over my shooting."

Quite contrary to my expectations, Dzerzhinsky smiled, and Messing laughed officiously to please his chief. Looking me straight in the face, Dzerzhinsky said to me almost reproachfully:

"You have misunderstood us. Who said anything about shooting? On the contrary, we want to give you a chance of obtaining your freedom on certain conditions. The whole of this affair will be quietly liquidated. Do you understand? Would you like that?"

My heart gave a bound, and I answered immediately:

"Of course I should like it."

D. Why, that's splendid. Comrade Messing will discuss the whole thing with you in detail. Have you a family?

I. Yes.

D. Where is your family? In Finland?

I. Yes.

D. Have you any relatives in Russia?

I. None at all.

D. Well, you can go for the present.

I. When shall I be released?

D. Well, it can't be done at once. I told you that everything must be arranged with certain formalities. In any case we won't keep you long.

On returning to my room I was so excited that I could not sleep, and walked about my room all night. When I had become somewhat calmer and thought over all that Dzerzhinsky had said to me, I suddenly had a feeling that there was another devilish machination of some kind at the bottom of the whole thing. Either my arrest had caused an outcry in Finland, and they were obliged to get rid of me as quickly as possible, or they were going to propose to me that I should become a secret agent of the Tcheka.

When I let my mind dwell on this last supposition and began to work it out in detail, I became almost certain that "the observation of certain conditions" must mean nothing else than a contract between the Tcheka and myself in the capacity of a secret agent.

Once this supposition had taken firm root in my mind, I could not dislodge it, and, filled with despair and horror, I decided to call the warder at once, ask for a pencil and paper, and write a declaration stating categorically that I was not willing to make my release the subject of any negotiations.

I obtained paper early next morning, had written a very full declaration, and was ready to hand it over to the warder, when suddenly a thought flashed into my mind:

"But suppose I am mistaken now, as I was when Dzerzhinsky spoke of a 'liquidation'. Perhaps they only mean to get Koponen and me to sign a document promising to say nothing about our treatment. The devil take them; we'll gladly give such a promise if only they'll let us out. Whatever we say, they can't compel us to hold our tongues once we've got to Finland."

So I resolved to wait and see what the Tchekists were

going to propose to me, and then my course of action would be clear.

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Four days later I was summoned for interrogation by a new examining judge named Khottaka. It must have been a White Russian or Polish name. After a whole series of questions had been put to me, I was charged with three further offences:

- (1) Secret relations with the international *bourgeoisie*.
- (2) Discrediting the Soviet power.
- (3) Economic espionage.

I was now charged under six clauses of the criminal code in all, five of which definitely indicated the death penalty.

As usual, I refused to sign the protocol of the examination and the indictments.

Towards the end of the examination Messing appeared. After a short summary of all my crimes, he endeavoured to convince me that I could reckon myself a dead man. Then followed an interval, after which, to my great astonishment and no small consternation, Messing began to express himself in the most laudatory terms concerning my "amiable character", "firmness", "calmness", and even my "pleasing appearance".

The performance was appallingly stupid. I am not abnormally silly, and Tchekist compliments only annoy me. So, to get nearer real business, I cut short Messing's torrent of eloquence with the question:

"When are you going to release me? I see that instead of releasing me you have charged me under three more clauses."

"The one thing does not exclude the other," Messing replied. "It all depends on you. Would you be willing, when set at liberty, to give us information about your fellow-countrymen and Russian *émigrés*? We will give you instructions. You will be excellently provided for from a material point of view, and we will allow you to carry on commercial business, in the place where your office used to be, if you like. You can write

to your family. When you make a trip abroad we will allow you as much as your firm did."

"I don't want to discuss this matter with you any further. Permit me to go back to my cell."

"It's no use being hasty," said Messing. "Look at yourself; see in what a state you are. Think of your family. Do you know that your wife is trying to get a visa to come to Petrograd? Here, sign this form."

On the form were some such words as these: "I, the undersigned, bind myself to execute the commission entrusted to me entirely in accordance with instructions received." I was so agitated that I do not remember the contents of this "compact with the devil" word for word, and I could not read the document carefully, for Messing would have interpreted this as a sign that I was going to agree to the proposal made to me.

I pushed the paper away from me as quickly as I could. "Let me go to my cell," I said. "I cannot discuss this matter with you. Your proposal does not appeal to me at all."

"Why not?" asked Messing. "Do you think we are not rich enough to pay liberally for your services? Your wife is coming here, and then perhaps you will change your mind."

The mention of my wife by this cur, and the utter baseness of his proposal, brought my patience to an end. I remember no details. I remember clearly that, despite my weakness at the time, Messing fled from me, carrying with him the light table with all the documents and the ink-stand.

Khottaka brandished his revolver and gave me a push which flung me on to a chair. I lost my balance and fell to the floor. There must have been a great deal of shouting and noise generally, for the room became filled with people. A man in military uniform pressed me tight against the floor, while my legs were held by one of the women who are on duty in the corridors to escort prisoners to their cells. When they lifted me up, Khottaka was still brandishing his revolver, and Messing, livid with fury, was shrieking:

"Take the fellow away! I'll have you put into a strait-waistcoat! You degenerate lunatic! I'll settle you!"

I had scarcely regained breath in my cell, and begun to bandage a sprained fore-finger with my handkerchief in the dark, when the prison governor, the doctor, the *Feldsher* or assistant doctor, and two warders came in. I remember perfectly that the doctor and *Feldsher* stood huddled in the doorway and did not approach me till the prison governor shouted:

“Go closer to him! Examine him!”

I kept absolutely quiet, and was so weak that I had to sit down on my bed. The *Feldsher* bound up my finger and gave me some valerian drops.

So ended my “rebellion”, which had no further consequences for me whatever.

CHAPTER XXII

The Tcheka's Motives—Attempts to Entrap My Wife—A Nocturnal Motor Drive—The Concrete Room—Renewed Persuasions from Messing—I Decide to Hold Out—Last Summons to Examination—The Documents in My "Case"

THERE IS A SILVER LINING to every cloud. Now, after all that had happened, the whole story of my imprisonment and its causes was perfectly clear to me.

This is how I saw it. At first the Soviet authorities had carried on commercial negotiations with me quite seriously, and had probably intended to give our firm orders. In consequence of the failure of the diplomatic negotiations for the recognition of the Soviet Government by the South American Republic where our firm was, their interest in commercial negotiations with me grew fainter. The Soviet authorities began to suspect that I had given my firm information representing the political and economic situation in Soviet Russia in an unfavourable light, and it is very likely that they suspected me of espionage in general, as they do in the case of every foreigner. My excellent knowledge of Russian, and my former service in the Imperial Fleet, strengthened these suspicions. As I had come to Soviet Russia with an ordinary, not a diplomatic passport, I possessed no right of *exequatur* and personal inviolability. Living as I did with the Consulate staff, and visiting foreign missions and Consulates, where I had many friends, I might, the Tcheka thought, see and hear a great deal that could be of interest to that body.

It was thus, probably, that the idea that my arrest was desirable gradually ripened in the mind of the Tcheka. This was eventually carried out, to avoid unpleasantness, by a charge of dealings in contraband being faked up. Incidentally the idea occurred to them that by terrorizing me they might obtain from me valuable information of some kind regarding the work of our and other Consulates, and then let me go. No special excuses need be made, as I was not a diplomatist,

but a private person, and my Government would not go to war on account of my having chanced to be arrested.

When the hopes of the Tcheka that I would, under intimidation, enrich them with interesting secret information were not justified, they decided to try to induce me to become a secret Tcheka agent. I seemed a person of value to that organization by reason of my social position, my connections with Russian *émigrés* during my period of service in the Imperial Fleet, and my Finnish citizenship, which opened the frontiers of all States to me. But this calculation, too, proved vain; instead of agreeing, I started a brawl and came near being murdered myself.

What was going to happen now? I had no strength left, and it was not to be supposed that my inquisitors would stop half-way in their efforts to enrol me among their agents. What Messing had said about my wife applying for a visa to come to Petrograd complicated matters in a high degree.

This was the last straw. If my wife came to Petrograd, nothing could prevent the Tcheka from arresting her, on the pretext that she was my accomplice. "They" can do anything. And once my wife was arrested, my little daughter in Finland would be an orphan, and the Tcheka, by playing on my feelings for the child, would at last break down my resistance. It seemed evident to me that all the efforts of the Tcheka would now be directed towards inducing my wife to come to Soviet Russia.

Nor was my supposition incorrect. When I returned to Finland in 1926, after all my misfortunes, I learnt that at the beginning of June 1924 a gentleman calling himself Pisarevsky, an engineer, had visited one of the employees of our Consulate. He told my countrymen that he had been in the same cell as myself in prison, and that I, anticipating that he would shortly be released, had asked him to go to the Finnish Consulate and beg them most urgently to accelerate my wife's arrival in Petrograd. Fortunately our Consulate was sceptical regarding the "engineer's" personality and the credibility of his story.

My wife, in Helsingfors, was rung up on the telephone one day by one "Captain Voronin", who declared that he had been in prison with me. He told her that I was in despair because her journey was being delayed.

I never met either the engineer Pisarevsky or Captain Voronin in my life, and I am therefore convinced that both these persons were sent to my friends and to my wife by the ubiquitous Tcheka.

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At the beginning of June I was called from my cell in the middle of the night. I supposed that I was being taken to be examined again, and was much surprised when my conductor passed the usual turning out of the corridor which led to the examining judges' rooms. We took several turnings, and at last found ourselves in front of a door which appeared to lead out into the courtyard. In the little square yard, surrounded by lofty towers, a closed car was waiting, and two Tchekists in uniform were walking up and down by it.

To be taken from a prison-cell by night, not merely without one's things, but hatless, and to find oneself, not at the expected interrogation, but in the prison-yard in the presence of a buzzing motor-car, is sufficient to agitate even a man of strong nerves. Before I was ever in prison I had often heard from my Russian friends of the nocturnal motor-cars which carried the Tcheka's victims to the place of execution. It was an eternal, terrible subject of conversation in Soviet Russia.

The shock to my nerves made me tongue-tied, and it was with a tremendous effort that I forced myself to utter the words, "Where am I being taken?" to which one of the Tchekists replied curtly, "You'll see." I gradually regained my self-control, and when the car stopped I was outwardly calm enough to say to the Tchekist:

"I left my cigarettes in my cell. Couldn't you give me a cigarette? I can't buy them anywhere so early."

The Tchekist held out his cigarette-case to me with friendly promptitude, and gave me a light from his lighter.

On getting out of the car I saw with astonishment that we had arrived at No. 2 Gorokhovaja Street, the headquarters of the Petrograd Tcheka, at which I had been arrested. One of my escort left me in the hall with the other Tchekist and himself ran upstairs. He returned a few minutes later, came down to the second floor, and shouted, leaning over the banisters:

"Take him to No. 9; they'll tell you there."

We turned out of the hall straight to the right and passed down a long dark passage to room No. 9. Someone evidently lived in this room; a bed was made on a wide couch, there was a wash-stand with toilet accessories, and photographs were arranged on a writing-table. My conductor unceremoniously pulled out several drawers of the writing-table, discovered a large box of cigarettes, offered me one, and began to smoke himself. We sat thus for at least half an hour. It was past four by the clock on the wall. At last the door opened and a tall, thin man in semi-military uniform, wearing a revolver and holding a paper in his hand, entered the room. Reading from the paper in a hesitating manner, and stumbling in his speech, he said:

"Ce-Ce-Ce-derhol, Boris Leontevitch."

"My name is Cederholm, Boris Leonidovitch," I answered.

The tall man glanced at me and said:

"Go on, walk in front of me."

We came to the end of the corridor and turned into a wider one. Suddenly my guide pressed my forearm gently, and with the words "This way, this way," forced me towards a door. On entering I recoiled, despite myself. Before me was a long room with a gently sloping cement floor. Several lights with white shades illuminated it brightly. The floor was covered with stains, there was a smell of carbolic acid, and several plain narrow boxes, like coffins, leaned against the wall. Not more than two or three seconds passed before my guide, who still held me by the elbow with his hand, pulled me quickly out into the corridor, saying, as though to himself, "O-o-oh, damn, I've made a mistake. We've got into the wrong passage."

The whole thing was sheer play-acting, a comedy of the crudest, most primitive kind, my escort's words included. It was unthinkable that even a drunken man could have made a mistake and confused the corridors, for that which we at last entered, after our visit to the mysterious room, was on the *second floor*, and the door of the room we now went into was an ordinary one, such as usually gives access to living-rooms, whereas the doors of the room we had entered "by mistake" were thick, double doors, covered with iron.

The room we now went into reminded me of a guardroom. A stack of rifles stood by the wall, and on the wall hung several revolvers and cartridge boxes. At a large writing-table sat Messing, Khottaka, and another man, very stout and with Jewish features, in civilian clothes. As soon as we entered the room Messing said to my conductor, in a sharp, dissatisfied tone: "Where have you been all this time, comrade?" to which the other, who had learnt his reply by heart, answered: "I mistook the passages, comrade, and we got into the concrete room by mistake." Messing made no reply, but only shrugged his shoulders and made a sign to me to sit down on a chair near the table.

After my long existence in a totally dark room my eyes had grown unaccustomed to light, and every time I was examined I had to turn away from the light or cover my eyes with my hand. This always led to disputes with the examining judge, who insisted that I should look him straight in the face when answering. So, on this occasion, Messing, seeing that I was turning away from the light and covering my eyes, said:

"If you are lying, at least be man enough to look us straight in the face. We've stood on ceremony with you long enough. You don't deserve civil treatment at all."

To this remark of Messing's I replied that I saw no sign even of ordinarily humane treatment, not to speak of civility.

"Don't try to humbug us. We've seen through you long ago. Look us straight in the face. We shall finish with your case to-day. It will be given you to read through in a day or two, and will be sent to the Central College of the Tcheka

in Moscow. It's not too late yet; it is in your power to make your lot easier and even to get yourself released. You know what awaits you. At least ten years' strict isolation, and perhaps even shooting."

"Do as you like," I said, "but don't think you're going to frighten me. I advise you to keep your methods of examination and intimidation for old maids."

The words which had escaped me let loose the flood of my eloquence, and without stopping or choosing my expressions, I told Messing and all those present all that I had said on such occasions several times before, when I had lost my self-control and could not remain calm.

This time I was infuriated more than ever by the cynical, crude, utterly stupid trick of bringing me to the Gorokhovaja by car and showing me the notorious concrete room—a demonstration which, the Tchekists thought, must finally break my stubbornness.

Messing interrupted me by crying in a rough voice:

"You're mad! You overestimate your importance. Nobody thinks of intimidating you. If we think fit, we can get rid of you without having recourse to intimidation. Your case will be examined by the Central College of the Tcheka in Moscow. There will be no trial, as it is all perfectly clear. Your wife has received a visa to enter Soviet Russia. See that she does not arrive too late. It might all have ended quite differently; you yourself are to blame for the whole thing. If you have anything of importance to say to me, inform the prison governor, and I will send for you. I advise you to decide quickly. You can go."

Although I believed nothing the Tchekists said, the news that my wife intended to come to Petrograd seemed plausible, and it made me unspeakably miserable. I was in such a depressed state, and so weakened physically, that I have no recollection whatever of being removed, put into a car, and taken back to prison. When I reached my cell I must at once have fallen into a sleep such as condemned prisoners sleep.

Next day, as my bodily strength returned, I began to suffer

unbearable mental torture. The thought that my wife might arrive at any hour, at any moment, that perhaps she had already been arrested at the frontier, never left me. My heart stood still when I heard the warder's step in the corridor; I expected that at any moment the door would open and I should be taken to the examining judge's little room, and there would have a momentary glimpse of my unhappy wife: she would be "shown" to me for a moment to convince me finally that there was no way out.

I tried, as quietly as I could, to imagine everything that might happen after this meeting, and somewhere in the secret depths of my brain fleeting thoughts of surrender began to take shape, but every time my conscience reawakened and I extinguished them. Had I the right, I asked myself, to expose my wife and child to unbearable sufferings in order to preserve my honour? Well and good—suppose I accept the Tcheka's conditions and enter its service? But will they really be simple enough not to attach certain guarantees to our agreement? For example, they may demand that my wife shall live in Petrograd. And what will happen then? Where shall I find the strength to execute the Tcheka's commission with a quiet mind? How shall I make myself base enough artfully to insinuate myself into people's confidence and betray them—perhaps send them to their death?

I thought it all over, bit by bit, and, with a mind perfectly at rest, made the only decision I possibly could make, seeing that only one code of morals exists—not to surrender on any account. My bodily strength was at an end, and God alone knew whether I should hold out until the Finnish Government, sooner or later, got me out of prison. But my wife could not be in serious danger. Even if she were arrested on the frontier, it would be impossible to conceal it, and it would become known in Finland. So unheard-of a mockery of justice and legality would make such an impression abroad that my wife would soon be released and sent back to her own country.

Such were, approximately, my thoughts at that time. In my reflections I had attached too much importance to many

factors, and it was well for me that it was so, for when I was sent for to be examined on June 15th, although I could hardly put one foot before the other, my mind was completely at rest and my resolve unshaken.

I was so certain that my wife had already been arrested that I was astonished when the examining judge, Khottaka, quietly handed me a file with a blue cover, saying:

"Read your case through and sign your name. It is going to Moscow, and your sentence will come in five or six weeks."

I opened the file with great curiosity, imagining that now at last I was going to see all the evidence given by secret agents in proof of my "criminal activities".

And what did I see?

A few forms which had previously been given me for signature by different examining judges; my own answers, affirming my complete innocence of all the charges brought against me without exception; all my petitions containing protests and complaints against the examining judges, which I had been naïve enough to write during the earliest weeks of my imprisonment; and finally a few open letters which I had sent to the Consulate at different times with the examining judge's permission.

Last of all, on a sheet of paper folded in two, was the detailed conclusion arrived at by the Petrograd Tcheka, written in a small hand. In it the Tcheka enumerated all my offences; and the last few lines were approximately as follows:

. . . and therefore, considering all the charges brought against the Finnish subject B. L. Cederholm to have been proved, have ordered that the whole case and all the material be sent for final decision to the Central College of the G.P.U.

At the foot of the order were several illegible signatures.

I was quite certain that Khottaka had made a mistake and given me the wrong document to read.

"There's nothing in this," I said. "No material whatever. There isn't even a reference to the original cause of my arrest. I don't see Koponen's evidence. As far as I remember, I am charged with dealings in contraband of war. There's not a

syllable about it here. You refer to evidence of some sort proving me guilty of organizing international espionage. Where is that evidence?"

The examining judge's reply was word for word as follows:

"All that is necessary has been given you to read. The rest is no concern of yours."

I had no alternative but to refuse to sign all this nonsense, according to my established custom. I received the stereotyped reply "As you please", after which Khottaka put the papers neatly into a portfolio and said to me:

"We-ell, my best wishes. We shall not see each other again. You will be transferred to the modified régime to-day, and will await your sentence. I hope you cannot reproach us with any lack of propriety in our treatment of you?"

The Tcheka's sensitiveness on the score of propriety is truly touching!

I never saw Khottaka again.

CHAPTER XXIII

An Amusing Mistake—More Comfortable Quarters—My Cell-mate Tchesnokoff—A Lawyer under “Nep”—The Vladimir Club Scandal—Cause of Tchesnokoff’s Arrest—Prisoners at Exercise—Dangerous Curiosity—A Students’ “Meeting”

THE TCHEKA PRACTISES FRAUD even in matters of detail; it is its system to do so. I was transferred to the modified régime on June 22nd, i.e. a week after it had been officially announced to me that the whole investigation was concluded and that the case was being sent to the Central College of the Tcheka in Moscow. So, even from the standpoint of Tchevist legality, I was unjustifiably kept in darkness, on the “secret section” régime, for an extra week.

When I was summoned to the room of the director of the special floor, I was so weak that I could not carry my things, and had great difficulty in ascending to the third gallery. The director returned my braces and tie to me. Then we went up to the fifth floor, went down a long passage, and stopped outside cell No. 163, belonging to the so-called fourth section. The cell was in all respects identical with those I had seen before, but it was very light, clean, and I might even say “pleasant”; for flowers stood in a vase on a little table neatly covered with a white cloth, a smart leather travelling bag stood on the floor, and on the carefully made bed sat a neatly dressed elderly man of very pleasant appearance.

When I entered, the man sitting on the bed rose at once, put his arm round my waist and made me sit down on the bed.

“You feel ill,” he said. “Don’t worry, and have a good rest, and it will all pass off. My name is George Dmitrievitch Tchesnokoff; I am a lawyer. You are probably a priest?”

I certainly did feel ill, for I was not accustomed to exercise, and the ascent of the fifth floor had made me very tired. But my new acquaintance’s supposition that I held ecclesiastical rank amused me so much that I gave a real laugh; for my past and present professions, my disposition, habits, and appearance, were

as unclerical as could be imagined. When I explained to Tchesnokoff who I was, the misunderstanding was cleared up. Tchesnokoff had been misled by my hat, which had quite lost its shape since I had been in prison, my long hair and beard, and my ulster buttoned up to the neck, which might well have concealed a priest's robe.

Boards and trestles were soon brought, and I constructed a bed for myself with Tchesnokoff's help. After the horrible conditions in solitary confinement my new quarters seemed to me the height of bliss and comfort. The double window had been taken out, and the light of an exquisite summer day poured through the barred window; the whole cell was filled with sunshine. I washed myself all over as thoroughly as possible for the first time in two months and a half, and made an admirable dinner on the food which Tchesnokoff, with true comradeship, offered me.

This excellent fellow had been in prison for over a month on the charge of counter-revolutionary activities and discrediting Soviet rule. A typical Slav, he was ruled entirely by his feelings and moods. He was fifty-two, but the misfortunes he had had to bear in life had made him look much older. A jurist by profession, he had come to the surface again in the "Nep" period, and had become a member of the recently founded college of advocates, or, as they were called in Soviet terminology, "legal representatives". One-sided as Soviet legislation is, a legal representative, if he has had some experience and observes due caution, can sometimes defend his client and secure, if not a complete acquittal, at any rate a mitigation of the sentence. As the cases brought before the courts generally arise out of criminal or economic offences, the legal representatives are able to avoid slippery political questions which might bring them into disfavour with the Soviet authorities.

Tchesnokoff had acquired a fairly good practice, and had even succeeded in becoming, in a certain way, a well-known man. He was able to take a three-roomed flat, clothe his wife and daughter and himself, and have done with dirty, exhausting labour—unloading barges or pulling down ruined houses.

But all this prosperity had suddenly been destroyed by a caprice of inexorable fate: Soviet life had played on him one of its characteristic tricks.

In Petrograd, and all the large towns of Soviet Russia, the Government has opened gaming clubs where roulette, macao, baccarat, and the various other games of chance are played. The income from these establishments is theoretically supposed to swell the funds of the Commissariat for National Education. The clubs are open all day long, but, of course, present a more animated scene at night than at any other time. Then all the rooms are filled to overflowing with the most variegated public imaginable—"Nepmen", foreigners in dinner-jackets, prostitutes, Tchekists, Soviet employees, workmen, and criminals. Gambling is a bond between all classes. These clubs, and the perverted forms which Soviet public and economic life have often assumed, are responsible for a vast amount of waste, embezzlement, suicides and murders. But the clubs are increasing in number, for they bring in a large income to the Government and make it easier for the Tcheka to spy on the population.

Some four months before I was arrested the so-called Vladimir Club case had made a great sensation in Petrograd. The Vladimir Club was a gaming establishment in the Vladimirskaia Street. It was discovered that the personnel of the club itself had been guilty of waste and embezzlement. As the director of the club, a prominent member of the Government¹ Committee of the Communist Party, on which he occupied a position of responsibility, was one of the leading figures in the scandal, and a reflection was thus cast on the honour of the party, it was decided to hold a so-called "exemplary" trial before a vast audience of workers. Over two hundred persons were charged, and the whole weight of the accusation was laid upon minor employees, croupiers, money-changers, clerks, waiters, and so on. Tchesnokoff undertook the defence of one of the croupiers, who was liable to the death penalty.

In delivering his speech for the defence, Tchesnokoff began by describing the characteristic features and objects of a State

¹ I.e. the Government, or province, of Petrograd.

organization, and went on to draw for his hearers a clear and vivid picture of a Soviet gambling hell, not forgetting to mention the swarms of cocottes, the everlasting scandals and brawls, and the criminal elements which filled the rooms. He quoted brief but convincing statistics of the crimes caused by the existence of the gaming clubs, and ended his speech more or less as follows:

"Citizens, the prosecution has endeavoured to prove that the Vladimir Club is a State institution of the most ideal Socialist republic in the world, and represents my client as a traitor to proletarian ideology."

Tchesnokoff's client eventually got off with a light sentence, but he himself incurred the suspicions of the Tcheka from the moment he delivered his speech for the defence. He and his clients became the objects of a systematic persecution. Twice the Tchekists entered and searched his flat at night, carrying away with them papers entrusted to him by his clients. In May he was arrested and charged with discrediting Soviet rule and counter-revolutionary activities.

Tchesnokoff was very nervous, for he feared that his case would not be publicly tried, but dealt with administratively—that is, by the Tcheka. This was anything but a consoling prospect, for the sentences pronounced by the Tcheka in the accused person's absence are always cruel and are subject to no revision. His family were bound to die of starvation, for their scanty savings could last a very short time, and my unfortunate comrade was at times plunged into hopeless despair.

In addition to his other troubles, Tchesnokoff suffered from chronic kidney disease; one of his kidneys had been removed, and he was compelled to diet himself severely. Once, when he had received his weekly parcel from his wife, he said to me with tears in his eyes:

"They've sent me milk, butter, and white meat;¹ and they'll soon have nothing to eat themselves."

But, true to his Slav temperament, he was sometimes filled with a quite incomprehensible optimism and hope, and at such

¹ The term "white meat" is applied in Russia to veal, poultry, etc.

moments he was very lively, witty, and the best company imaginable.

We were friends from the first day of our acquaintance, and our friendship grew stronger daily. I was charmed by my friend's exceptional delicacy; he never showed the least sign of curiosity or questioned me about the causes of my arrest and the details of my life in Russia.

We were let out daily for a walk in the prison-yard, and we enjoyed our quarter of an hour's exercise, running along the pavement on one side of the big square central courtyard. Some of the prisoners in the rooms near ours took exercise at the same time as we did, and sometimes we were able to talk to them. One day Tchesnokoff met a colleague of his among these prisoners. This meeting was later of benefit to me.

The arrested Polish prelate Count Dmowski used to take his exercise on the other side of the courtyard, and I saw the Englishman, Captain Reilly, walking in the central circle, which was fenced round. It was rumoured among the prisoners that Reilly had been brought from Moscow on a very serious charge in connection with the arrest of the well-known Savinkoff.¹ On two different occasions, as it chanced, I came into contact with Captain Reilly in prison, and I had then no idea that so terrible an end was in store for him. I read of his death in 1927, when I had returned to my own country.

On the first day of my stay in the fourth section I sent an open letter to the Consulate containing the following words: "Well; am allowed to receive parcels. Cederholm." Four days after I had sent this letter I received my first parcel, and I continued to receive them weekly so long as I remained in the fourth section.

These parcels came at a fortunate moment, for I had lost all my strength; it was painful to me to have to accept Tchesnokoff's kindness and help, for he shared with me the last crumb his poor wife sent him.

¹ Boris Savinkoff, the prominent Social Revolutionary leader, who after taking part in various anti-Soviet projects abroad returned to Russia and "recanted". This availed him nothing, for he was imprisoned and murdered by being flung from an upper window of the prison.

We could take out books from the prison library once a week. This library was very large, being a legacy from the old pre-Revolution days.

At my request, I was sent a huge quantity of supplies, and, as Tchesnokoff expressed it, ate and behaved as if I had come to a hydropathic.

Once a fortnight we were taken to the baths; these were very dirty and neglected, but it was a great pleasure, nevertheless. Our room, thanks to us, was spotlessly clean, and we used to strip to the skin every day and pour cold water over ourselves—collected in our basins and jugs from the wash-stand tap. Then we scrubbed the floor and chairs thoroughly. I recovered my health very quickly, and regained my peace of mind. We used to peep out of the window at the people walking in the courtyard. After dinner, and until evening, the prisoners from the so-called common rooms used to take exercise inside the central palisade—from eighty to a hundred persons at once, so it was evident that the inmates of several rooms were exercised at the same time. Every twenty minutes we heard from our window the cry, "Exercise over, citizens".

This cry was uttered by old Vasili Stepanovitch, a celebrated person in contemporary Russian history. For thirty-two years he had repeated his "Exercise over" every twenty minutes every day. It was his duty to take the prisoners from the common rooms to exercise in the courtyard and to return them to their rooms.

Since the Revolution, the number of Vasili Stepanovitch's "guests" had increased enormously, and their intellectual level had become higher. Before the Revolution the persons whom Vasili Stepanovitch had had to take to exercise had been mostly criminals and only occasionally political prisoners—usually students. Now the prisoners, almost without exception, belonged to the educated and aristocratic class. From 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. every day more than 2,000 persons passed through the palisade. Before one o'clock specially important and privileged prisoners took their exercise. Our prison was entirely at the disposal of the Tcheka, and was officially called the "house of preventive

detention", or for short, as the Soviet custom is, "D.P.Z." (*Dom predvaritel'nogo zakliutchenija*). This abbreviated designation had caused the place to be aptly nicknamed *Dom proletarskoi zabavy* ("House of proletarian entertainment").

Looking out of window was most strictly forbidden, but it could be done if one was careful and took advantage of the interval between two of the corridor warder's observations through the peep-hole in the door.

Sometimes the sentry, who always stood in the sentry-box in the middle of the circle surrounded by the palisade, would notice prisoners' faces at the cell windows. When this happened the sentry used to shout: "Get away from the window!" and if the prisoner did not go away, a shot followed. The walls round those windows which were allowed to remain open were full of bullet-holes, and I myself one day nearly did myself a serious injury owing to my absent-mindedness and deafness. I was looking down at Captain Reilly, who used to take exercise in the mornings inside the palisade, and who interested me, and I probably failed to hear the soldier's warning. At the moment the shot was fired, Tchesnokoff pulled me down from the window by the legs; the bullet struck the left-hand wall of the window embrasure, ricocheted into our cell and fell, flattened out, close to the door.

Sometimes the numerous students of both sexes who were imprisoned, some in the cells of our section and some in the cells of the so-called sixth section, at right angles to our block, would begin to protest noisily and organize, as it were, meetings. A student's head would appear first at one window, then at another, and the sentry would fire in two directions at once. The young men and women greeted each shot with loud cries and whistlings. We could hear the warder in our passage rushing about helplessly trying to catch the rebels.

All the sentries off duty were lined up close to the sentry-box in the courtyard, and the prison governor called the young people to order through a megaphone. For a few minutes quiet seemed to have been restored, then the "meeting" began again. One of the students, more eloquent and audacious than

the rest, would shout from a window through a paper megaphone, urging his comrades to stand fast. I remember a fragment of an extempore speech of this kind, delivered from a window in a very pleasant baritone by a Social Revolutionary student—a very young man he must have been. The orator drew a vivid picture of the horrors and the tyranny for which the Soviet power was responsible, and concluded as follows:

“Our comrades are flung into prison, our brothers and sisters are hourly menaced with arrest and execution. There is no freedom of speech in Russia; the unhappy Russian people is being vivisected for the sake of fantastic doctrines. The country is ruled by a pack of usurpers and rascals. Comrades, some of us will be shot or sent to the forests of Siberia to-day or to-morrow, but our executioners’ triumph will be short-lived! They cannot put the whole of Russia in prison! Hundreds will come after us, then thousands and millions! Comrades! long live a great, free Russia and a great, free Russian people! To hell with the usurpers, executioners, oppressors! To hell with Asiatic rule! To hell with the adventurers and madmen!”

Enthusiastic shouts of “Hurrah!” resounded from all the windows, and lighted bundles of straw and burning mattresses were flung down into the courtyard. There was a crash of broken windows, and the shouting continued. The sentry and the rest of the guard, which had been turned out, fired at random in different directions. Several warders ran along our corridor. Doors were opened and slammed to; women’s hysterical cries were mingled with the filthy cursing of the warders. It was nearly evening before the young men and women were quiet again.

That day there were two more suicides. A student in cell No. 176 cut his arteries open with a splinter of window glass, and a girl student, whom all the students called Varenka, threw herself down from the fifth gallery when she was being escorted through the “special floor” to examination.

During the four and a half months I spent in the fourth section I heard of twenty-nine cases of suicide in our section, i.e. an average of nearly two suicides a week. But there were probably far more suicides than I knew of.

CHAPTER XXIV

Our Feminine Neighbours—A Pleasant Acquaintance—A Stereotyped "Case"—The Ladies' Fate—Our Prison Governor—Efforts to Communicate with Friends—I Thrash a Spy—Five Days in a Dungeon

THERE WERE A NUMBER of women prisoners in our section and also in the other sections of the prison, as the women's section was partially under repair and there were not a sufficient quantity of single rooms.

One day, when Tchesnokoff and I had been sent for together to receive parcels, I looked through the door of a neighbouring cell, which the warder was shutting in a leisurely manner, and saw that there were two women there. As far as I could see, our feminine neighbours were very comfortably installed, and both were smartly dressed. I told Tchesnokoff, whose vision had been less acute, what I had seen, and agreed with him that on the way back he should somehow detain the warder, so that I might be able to go on in front and look through the peep-hole in the door of the cell where the ladies were. In prison it is always useful to see and, as far as possible, know everything.

As agreed, Tchesnokoff stumbled on the way back, dropped the basket containing his supplies, and strewed the floor with underclothing, rolls, apples, and sugar. While he and the warder were cursing each other and picking up the scattered articles I went ahead quickly, knocked lightly on the door for the preservation of the decencies, pushed back the bolt of the peep-hole, and peeped into our fair neighbours' cell. Both ladies, disturbed by the unexpected knock, turned their faces expectantly towards the door, and I could see that both were middle-aged and pleasant-looking, and evidently belonged to the educated class.

When I had gone into our cell and arranged my parcels, I at once took steps to make our neighbours' acquaintance, by means, of course, of knocking. Tchesnokoff watched my conversations with envy, for he was a very imperfect master of the

science of communicating with one's neighbours, so valuable in prison.

Our acquaintance with the ladies was very quickly established, and they proved to be very agreeable conversationalists. One of them was a jurist's wife, and the other turned out to be the wife of Commander Balk, an old brother-officer of mine. On learning this, I told her who I was, and said that her husband and I had once been shipmates before the Revolution. In a few days' time our acquaintance through the wall ripened into friendship and twice we even contrived to exchange a few words at the time of the morning "clean-up", when the doors of two or three cells are opened at once to allow dirt to be thrown out into the passage.

The two ladies' husbands were in the sixth section of the same prison, but they had no news of them at all. Both ladies had been in prison for six months already on a charge of espionage, but the end of the investigation of their case was not yet in sight. Their "case" was one of a stereotyped character; dozens, if not hundreds, of "cases" of the kind are started every day in Soviet Russia.

Mrs. Balk's companion, Mrs. Balakhanoff, had had, according to Soviet ideas, a large flat, consisting of four rooms. The law allowed her to make use of three rooms only, as the family consisted of four persons—Balakhanoff himself, his wife, her mother, and their little boy. As Balakhanoff had been, before the Revolution, an official in the Ministry of Justice, the house committee was always making trouble for him and threatening to put some "proletarian element" into his flat. To avoid an undesirable lodger, the Balakhanoffs took in a young lady of their acquaintance, who had a post in a military co-operative society. The secretary of one of the foreign consulates was paying attentions to this young lady; and sometimes, of an evening, a small company used to gather round the Balakhanoffs' tea-table—the love-smitten diplomatist, the host and hostess, their lodger and their old friends, Commander Balk and his wife. It ended in their all being arrested and charged with espionage. Only the old lady, Mrs. Balakhanoff's mother,

had so far been left alone—and the diplomatist, thanks to his diplomatic passport.

At the time of my friendship with these ladies they had resolved to declare a hunger strike, demanding the speedy conclusion of the investigation and a personal interview with their husbands. They informed us daily of all the details of their hunger strike, and we endeavoured to give them all the moral support we could. On the fifth day we heard someone go into their cell several times, and on the sixth day they told us that they were stopping the hunger strike, as the public prosecutor himself had come and given them his word that the whole "case" would be finished in a day or two, and that all the persons implicated would be released until their trial was held. Only Mrs. Balakhanoff obtained a personal interview with her husband, for Mrs. Balk's husband had died in the psychiatric section of the prison hospital.

Both ladies were shortly transferred elsewhere, and a year after the episode I have described I met one of them in the Solovetsky concentration camp. I had difficulty in recognizing my elegant prison neighbour in that frail form, standing up to the knees in liquid mud. She was engaged in unloading bricks from some barges which had come to the Solovetsky Islands from Kem. Large eyes, full of suffering, shone dimly in a thin face, over which the brown skin was tightly drawn; they seemed to express all the horrors and torments she had suffered. I myself was carrying planks to repair the wharf, and a long conversation was impossible. Of course there had been no sort of trial of our neighbours' "case". One of them had been sent to the Solovetsky camp for five years, and the other to the Narym region of Siberia. I did not ask after her husband, not wishing to say anything that might render her mental sufferings more acute. Our conversation was cut short by a sudden shout from the overseer:

"Why are you talking there? Do you want a bullet in the back of your neck?"

I did not want a bullet in the back of my neck, and returned to my interrupted work.

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At the beginning of September cold, rainy weather set in; we had to shut the window, and it became gloomy, grey, and cold in our cell. Tchesnokoff became a regular invalid, and lay on his bed for days on end, stifling his groans. I learnt from conversations with our neighbours, during my daily exercise, that many prisoners in our section had the right to see their relatives once a week. My only right to communicate with the outside world consisted in the receipt of weekly parcels. These parcels were examined by the prison authorities twice—in the prison office and by the section director when they were distributed. Everything was cut up into the tiniest fragments, and I had been forbidden to receive cigarettes at all, because I had protested against the cardboard mouthpieces being ripped up—the prison administration had endeavoured to discover hidden notes for me in them. I knew nothing at all, therefore, of the steps the Consulate had taken to get me liberated; nor did I know whether the Consulate was aware of the real nature of my “case”. I read a great deal; my reading consisted of books from the prison library and Soviet newspapers, which we were allowed to buy through the section director. I was entitled to draw a small sum of money every week from my personal account, as my friends paid in money on my behalf at the prison office.

On Tchesnokoff's advice, I presented a petition to the public prosecutor of the Tcheka asking that I might be allowed to have an interview with some one of my countrymen from the Finnish Consulate. At the same time I wrote an open letter to the Consulate asking them to try to get permission to have an interview with me. Neither step had any success. A second petition met with the same fate; then I lost patience and asked to see the prison governor, Bogdanoff.

This Bogdanoff was an interesting figure—a regular product of the Revolution. In 1917 he deserted from the Russo-German front, and took an active part in the revolution in the streets of Petrograd. Until 1919 he belonged to the special detachment of the Tcheka for the uprooting of espionage and counter-revolution. In 1920 or 1921 Bogdanoff was appointed chief

executioner in our prison. In 1922, having been through the higher party school, he was appointed prison governor. During one of the regular shootings in the prison basement, one of Bogdanoff's victims caught the little finger of his left hand in his teeth and bit it off. To this day Bogdanoff tells the story of how he lost his finger to his subordinates with pride, and one of the warders, whom Tchesnokoff and I had "fatted up", passed on the story to us with no less pride in his gallant governor.

I learnt nothing particular from my conversation with Bogdanoff, for he told me that everything had been sent to its proper destination, and that he, Bogdanoff, could not compel my fellow-countrymen to come and see me if they did not want to. There was nothing for me to do but to await my sentence, since all means of communication with the world outside were closed.

I often racked my brains for some method of conveying news of myself to my friends by means of what is called a "return parcel". Dirty washing, empty milk-pots, thermos flasks, and utensils of all kinds are called "return parcels"; the prisoners hand them over to the section director on certain days to be sent out, as the prisoners say, *na voliu*, "to freedom". Owing to the extreme poverty of the Soviet citizens, the number of prisoners who receive parcels is very small, and there are hardly any return parcels. In consequence, every item of a return parcel is most carefully felt all over and examined. If the prison staff finds anything suspicious among the things which are being sent out, the guilty person is permanently deprived of the right to receive parcels. Great as the risk was, I nevertheless made one attempt to send news of myself. I unsewed a small part of the lining of a spare pair of trousers and slipped in a tiny note. The prison staff evidently did not notice this, or I should have suffered for it at once. But, unfortunately, my friends also failed to find the note.

In the middle of September a third lodger made his appearance in our cell—the assistant director of the Pulkovo astronomical observatory, Podgorny by name. A couple of days later

a former official of the administration of the Imperial Palace, named Lapin, was placed in the cell.

The cell became crowded. Soon after Lapin there arrived yet another man, who told us his name was Bogomoloff. There was something very strange in this Bogomoloff's behaviour, and we formed the impression that he had been placed with us by the Tcheke as a spy. First he tried to extract confidences from Podgorny, then he began to worry me. The lack of space, the stuffiness, and the uncertainty of my position had again reduced me to a very nervous state, and the end of the matter was that I went for Bogomoloff and gave him a thrashing.

After this incident life in our cell became unendurable, for one could not turn round comfortably; and Bogomoloff's antipathetic face was always before my eyes. I was very glad, therefore, when I was placed in a dungeon as the result of a complaint made against me by this fellow Bogomoloff. The dungeon was much better than the two "secret" cells in which I had been imprisoned for nearly two months. It had no windows, but an electric light burned continually; it was warm and dry, and I was alone with my thoughts. I was kept in the dungeon for five days, and on the sixth day I was taken back to cell No. 163. Neither Bogomoloff nor Podgorny was there any longer, and I found only Lapin and my friend Tchesnokoff, both of whom welcomed me with delight.

At about midnight on September 22nd, Lapin was sent for without his things, and never came back to us. At exercise next day we heard that former colleagues of his—officials and subordinate employees of the old Tsarist *okhrana*¹—had been summoned from other cells at the same time as Lapin. Like Lapin, they had been sent for in a hurry, without their things, and had not returned to their rooms. Later, when I was in the "common rooms" section, I often saw persons condemned to death being removed—once a week, on Thursdays. But I will relate this in greater detail in later chapters.

At the end of September I was taken to the prison photographer and photographed in three different positions. In

¹ Lit. "protection"—the title of the secret police under the old régime.

Tchesnokoff's opinion, this indicated that a decision in my case was imminent, and that there would be a change of some kind in my prison lot.

Tchesnokoff was permanently ill, and I was suffering from nerves. Thus we reached the month of October.

CHAPTER XXV

Sentenced to Three Years in the "Solovky"—I Decide for a Hunger Strike—Common Mistakes of Hunger Strikers—My Demands—New Quarters—A Week on Hunger Strike—A Visit from the Governor—Tchesnokoff's Last Message—Good News—Removed to Haas Hospital—End of my Hunger Strike

ONE EVENING at the beginning of October I was called out into the corridor and an individual read to me, rapidly and in a low voice, the sentence pronounced by a "special session of the Central College of the Tcheka". Of all that he read to me I understood one thing only—that for all sorts of crimes against the Soviet power I was sentenced to three years' imprisonment in the Solovetsky Islands concentration camp, not counting my period of preventive detention, and without the right to petition for the revision of my sentence or for the exercise of mercy.

A transport was leaving in ten days, and I was again categorically refused an interview with one of my fellow-countrymen.

My six months' imprisonment had seriously affected my health, and I had not the smallest doubt that I should be unable to endure imprisonment in a concentration camp.

This transport, with which I was to be sent to the Solovetsky Islands,¹ was, unfortunately, the last direct transport of the year, for in November all communication between the Solovetsky Islands and the mainland is stopped. The sea freezes in a belt many miles wide all round the islands, and also in the neighbourhood of the mainland, and in the absence of powerful ice-breakers the Solovetsky Islands are entirely cut off from the outer world for seven months. During these seven winter months many hundreds of prisoners in the Solovetsky concentration camp die of under-nourishment, chills, and the horrible sanitary conditions, not to speak of the frequent

¹ Commonly called, for short, "Solovky", which term the author generally uses.—*Translator's Note.*

shootings which put an end to hundreds of human lives. Very many, therefore, prefer to terminate their lives by suicide rather than go to a slow death by torture in the Solovky.

The circumstances did not allow me a long period of reflection; I had to make a definite decision at once.

I had two choices. I could inform the Finnish Consulate at once officially, i.e. by an open letter sent through the prison administration, of the sentence I had received, and ask them to send me all the things indispensable for a long stay in Polar surroundings in winter. If I sent this news to the Consulate, I might hope that it would take measures to defend my interests; for now that the investigation of my "case" was over and an *administrative* sentence, i.e. one delivered without public trial, had come into force, the Finnish diplomatic mission had a perfect right to insist either on my case being publicly tried or on my being released immediately.

But who could guarantee that the prison staff would forward my letter to its destination? The more I thought about the matter, the more strongly I began to feel that to send a letter to the Consulate would be an overhasty step on my part. The prison staff, according to its custom, would hand the letter over to the Tcheka, it would be filed with the other documents relating to the "case", and I should lose valuable time without any result.

There was a further circumstance which compelled me to seek some definite decision. While the Consulate was conducting a correspondence about me with a number of different authorities I should be sent to the Solovky, the sea would freeze at the end of November, and I should be done for; for, cut off as I should be from the outside world for seven months, no one could help me.

Finally, yet another consideration, perhaps the most important of all, began to take shape in my mind: my letter to the Consulate, asking that money and clothes might be sent, would seem to the Tcheka clear proof that I was reconciled to the sentence and was ready to accept it in a spirit of submission.

I therefore came to a firm and final decision to declare a

hunger strike to the death. I am as fully convinced now, when I write these lines, as I was then, that this decision was the right one in the circumstances.

First of all, I had to rely entirely upon myself, and set before myself the object to be secured: by one means or another to avoid going with the transport which was about to start. When the sea had frozen, the worst they could do would be to send me to the concentration camp at Kem—the last point on the mainland, on the shores of the White Sea. At that time I still knew but little about the Soviet prisons and concentration camps, and I felt that it must be much better at Kem than in the Solovky. I know now that Kem is as perfect a hell as the Solovky; but nevertheless it has one important advantage over the Solovetsky camp—escape can be attempted, as Kem is not cut off from the outside world even in winter.

Yet another circumstance spoke in favour of a hunger strike to the death. When being interrogated by different examining judges, I had often perceived from various indications how disagreeably the fact that the Consulate knew of my arrest hampered the work of the Tcheka. The arrival of food for me from the Consulate every week was referred to by the examining judges with insincere smiles and ironically courteous remarks.

Finally, I had no choice. The Solovky meant a certain death by torture. A hunger strike gave me a very small chance, but still a chance, of a change for the better in my lot. So I decided to starve.

The technique of a hunger strike was known to me in every detail, for I had heard a great deal about it from other prisoners at exercise in the courtyard. Moreover, the hunger strike carried out by the ladies next door to us, with whom I had talked through the wall, was still fresh in my memory.

The general failings of prisoners who declare a hunger strike are lack of endurance, a naïve belief in the genuineness of the Tcheka agents' promises, and not knowing how to formulate their demands so that the Tcheka can fulfil them, even in part. Many, for example, go on hunger strike demanding that the sentence pronounced on them shall be immediately quashed

or commuted to some less severe punishment. What could be naïver and more stupid than such demands?

Sentences are pronounced by the Central College of the Tcheka in Moscow, which pronounces hundreds of sentences daily on the strength of reports from the local branches of the Tcheka in every part of Soviet Russia. Consequently months pass before a sentence can be examined by the Central College, and the hunger striker will die long before his demand comes up for consideration. Almost every hunger strike, therefore, ends in the hunger striker, after five or six days, giving way on the strength of a promise from the public prosecutor to "do all that is in his power" and stopping the hunger strike. Very often, instead of the public prosecutor of the Tcheka being summoned, one of the prison staff appears in that rôle. Is it worth while to disturb the public prosecutor just because Citizen X. or Citizen Y. thinks it unjust that he has been exiled to Siberia for five years, or sentenced to ten years' imprisonment in the Solovetsky camp, for having corresponded with an *émigrée* aunt in London or known the secretary of some consulate?

Being an observant person by nature, I had not spent six months in a Tcheka prison for nothing, and so it was more or less clear to me how I must act.

The morning after I had received my sentence, I declared a hunger strike. My reasons and demands were set forth as follows:

(1) The sentence was illegal, because there was not a single proof that I was guilty of espionage, organizing counter-revolutionary bands, and dealings in contraband of war. The whole of my "case" ought to be investigated by public trial.

(2) I was ill, and demanded medical inspection. To be sent to the Solovky in my state of health would probably mean my death. I demanded that the execution of my sentence should be suspended pending the revision of my "case" by a court.

(3) As I had no relatives or intimate friends in Petrograd, I could, as a Finlander, count only on the help of the Finnish Consulate-General. According to the regulations under which

persons were transported to concentration camps, I was entitled to three interviews of half an hour's duration with one of my compatriots living in the Consulate building.

Not one of these demands could be fulfilled; of that I was sure. But all the demands I had put forward were perfectly *bona fide* and, what was most important of all, were formulated in such a way that they must give rise to correspondence between the Moscow Tcheka and the Petrograd branch. I was sure of this, for during my six months of prison life I had made a close study of administrative methods.

As the Petrograd Tcheka had the right, in important cases, to delay a prisoner's transportation to the Solovky, I was sure that I should succeed in missing one transport. My death from starvation in the Tcheka's Petrograd prison, close to the Finnish Consulate, could not possibly suit the book of the Tcheka, for it would give rise to unpleasant complications and be reported in the foreign papers. Thus it depended on me myself and my powers of resistance to make the case "important" and enable the Tcheka to postpone my transportation. The ten days which remained at my disposal before the departure of the transport were more than sufficient for my exhausted organism to reach the utmost limits of its endurance, and perhaps even pass them.

It all depended how far my heart could stand the test. In any case I counted on being sent to the prison hospital as soon as I lost consciousness and my condition was recognized as dangerous; and there the supervision would be less strict and I should somehow manage to communicate with the Consulate.

The whole of this plan was very risky, in view of my very bad state of health, but I was faced with *certain* death in the Solovky, and I was bound to clutch at the slightest chance of exchanging that fate for a better one.

About midday the prison governor came to my room and endeavoured to make it clear to me that my hunger strike would lead to nothing. His words convinced me that exactly the opposite was the case. At about two o'clock I was thoroughly searched, had all my things and food supplies taken away, and was left

only my overcoat, bedclothes, tobacco and pipe. Then I was taken downstairs and placed alone in a special cell two floors lower.

My leave-taking from George Dmitrievitch Tchesnokoff was very moving, and no wonder, for we had been prison-mates for nearly four months, and had gone through many painful experiences together. God alone knew when our paths would cross again.

My new cell differed in no respect from its predecessor. It had probably been uninhabited for several days, for it had not been cleaned up, and one of the glass panes of the barred window was knocked out, which made the cell very chilly. After four months spent in the company of fellow-prisoners the loneliness was oppressive. I was in very low spirits, tortured by my ignorance of what awaited me and the fear of making some blunder in the negotiations with my inquisitors—by a careless gesture or word, the play of my features, the expression in my eyes. A minute's weakness and the whole game might be lost.

At about four o'clock in the afternoon the prison governor, the director on duty, and a warder came into my cell. I was searched again and my person and the whole room examined in the minutest detail. Having convinced themselves that no food was concealed anywhere, they departed.

I had already grown accustomed to my vault, and now proceeded to "take my bearings"—an *orientirovka*, as it is called in prison slang. I had to find out who were above me on the higher floors and who my neighbours were. My neighbour to the right was a priest, to the left either someone who had been in prison only a very short time or a foreigner, for I could not understand his rapping at all. Above me was the secretary of the tanning trust, Pluksne, with whom, as it happened, I had become acquainted before my arrest, as I had conducted negotiations with this tanning trust regarding certain deliveries. Pluksne was a very good-natured, obliging fellow. He was in prison on the charge of taking bribes, and was shot in March 1925.

At my request, he told me the numbers of the rooms above him. Fate had willed that I should once more be able to converse with Tchesnokoff, for my old cell, No. 163, was directly above me, though Pluksne's cell was between us. As my hearing is poor, I used, when I wanted to talk to someone, to lean my back against the pipe of the heating apparatus and press my neck to it. The sound produced by the rapping passed through my skull, and I heard the faintest rap perfectly clearly. As it was very chilly in the cell, my posture against the radiator aroused no suspicion whatever.

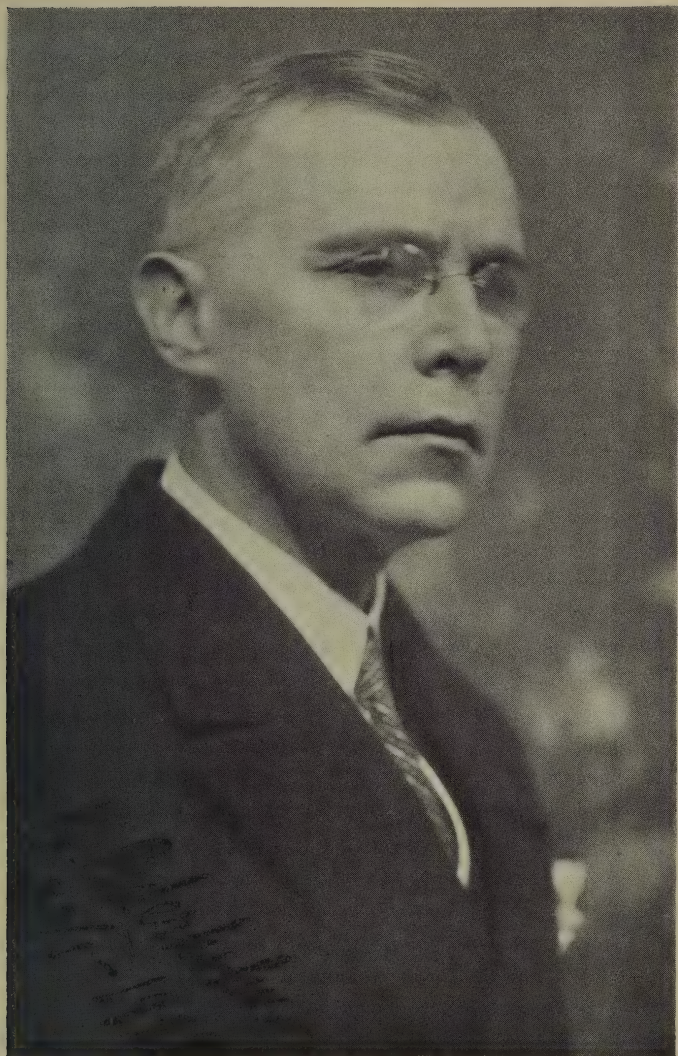
The first day of the hunger strike passed without any particular incident; my nerves were so strained that I hardly felt any hunger at all. At the end of the second day I felt a desire for food, but the sensation of hunger was quite endurable and disappeared when I smoked.

At the end of this second day Fate smiled on me for the first time for many months. While at exercise in the courtyard, Tchesnokoff had met his old colleague referred to in a previous chapter. The lawyer in question had just received what was called a "minus twelve" sentence, i.e. he had been forbidden to reside in any of the twelve largest towns in Soviet Russia. As he was due to be set at liberty at any moment, my trusty friend commissioned him to inform one of my fellow-countrymen at the Consulate, without delay, of all that had happened to me, the hunger strike included. I heard afterwards that the commission had been executed, and had been of great help to me.

Tchesnokoff is no longer alive. He died in Irkutsk¹ prison. Suffering from chronic kidney disease, he was not strong enough to endure the hardships of a journey lasting nearly a month and confinement in six prisons on the way. He was a noble-hearted fellow, a man of high integrity. May God recompense him for his earthly sufferings and his compassionate heart!

The third and fourth days of the hunger strike were the hardest to bear. I was horribly hungry, and I was disgusted and ashamed to find that, despite my acute mental sufferings,

¹ In Siberia.



THE AUTHOR AT THE PRESENT TIME

despite my thoughts of those dear to me whom I had left in my native country, thoughts of various table delicacies found their way into my mind.

On the fifth day there was a loud buzzing in my ears, and it hurt me to rise from my bed, but the acuteness of the hunger was over, and there was a feeling of unaccustomed lightness throughout my body. If I lay quiet, perfectly motionless, I found reflection very pleasant. My brain was very clear, and I do not think that ever in my life, owing to my everyday occupations and business, did I think so profoundly on those questions which occupied my mind during the second half of my hunger strike.

On the evening of the sixth day of the hunger strike I was summoned to the prison governor's study. I did not go, for I was very weak and wanted to lie down. Some time afterwards the governor himself came to my cell, with a gentleman of Oriental type and one of the examining judges who had dealt with my case. Behind them, the *Feldsher*, wearing a blouse, stood huddled up against the door. The examining judge conducted the negotiations throughout; the others were listeners only.

"Your hunger strike will lead to nothing," the examining judge began. "You have committed crimes and must bear the punishment."

"My hunger strike will attain some object in any case," I replied, "for at the worst I shall die. It's better to die here than to go to a lingering death in the Solovky. If I have committed a crime, you must prove my guilt, and try me in public."

"That is empty talk. You will be sent to the Solovky anyhow. But anyhow, I promise you that I will do everything possible to get your case reviewed, and very likely you will soon be brought back from the Solovky to Leningrad. Look here, I have drawn up a statement in your name that you are stopping the hunger strike; sign it, and that will be the end of the business."

There are moments in every man's life in which he over-

estimates his own importance and strikes a theatrical attitude. The moment I am describing was one of these. I turned to the examining judge and said:

"I beg you to let me die in peace. I won't sign anything. I wrote everything I thought necessary in my declaration of the hunger strike. I shall die, but I have the gratification of knowing that my death will cause you trouble."

Then the examining judge turned to the *Feldsher*. "Comrade *Feldsher*," he said, "examine the citizen." He added, immediately, addressing me:

"That's all fantasy. We won't let you die, and if you go on with the hunger strike, we shall feed you artificially."

"I will not allow it, so long as I have strength, and you have no right to apply force to me."

"We shall wait till there is no need to use force."

The *Feldsher's* inspection was not elaborate. He felt my pulse, and poured some laurel-cherry drops from a little box he had brought with him into a tiny glass. I consigned the *Feldsher* and his drops to perdition, and was at once ashamed of my lack of self-control, for that prison *Feldsher*, Koltaeff by name, was a very decent, kind-hearted fellow.

"You're only making yourself worse by your hunger strike," the examining judge said again. "Finland won't help you. Think of your family there, in your own country."

"That's no business of yours. I don't want to talk to you."

The whole party went away, the door was slammed to, and I was left alone once more with my thoughts.

The examining judge's words, "Finland won't help you", puzzled me very much. Had he said that because the Consulate already knew of my hunger strike and had taken steps of some kind, or simply to deprive me of all hope? I puzzled endlessly over the matter.

On the seventh day I felt pretty active. I washed and cleaned my teeth. I gargled several times in the course of the day, for my mouth and throat were fearfully dry. I avoided drinking, for I did not know whether it was possible to drink much water after going without food for so long. I felt no particular thirst, and

drank a few sips only twice in the course of the day. I had no desire whatever to eat, as I felt rather sick.

The doctor came, sounded my heart, and advised me to stop the hunger strike. I said nothing to him, and turned my face to the wall.

On the eighth day I tore off a narrow strip of material from my handkerchief and began to make knots in it, for I was afraid of losing count of the days. I was just going to make the eighth knot when the door opened and in walked the warder on duty, Semenoff, who had "guarded" me in the earliest months of my imprisonment in the "special section". Semenoff was the greatest fool imaginable, and in past times I had distracted myself in my loneliness not a little by "pulling his leg".

"What are you doing, citizen? Is it possible? Give me that string at once. You never give one a moment's peace."

Ill as I felt, and in anything but a joking mood, I could not refrain from a pun at the sight of Semenoff's familiar, stupid face. Then I asked:

"What string do you want, Semenoff?"

"Why, that one, the one you're twisting. The fellow's got some brass. You're not allowed to hang yourself. What would happen if all the prisoners hanged themselves?"

Citizen Semenoff was a simple character, free from complexities; his thoughts were always elementary and perfectly definite. He took away my knotted rag, the remains of my handkerchief, and my towel. Twenty minutes later the honest minion Semenoff brought the prison director on duty into my cell, and they took away my sheet and pillow-case and took the laces out of my shoes. It was evident that I was to be allowed to die only in the Solovetsky Islands, as my death in Petrograd, next door to the Finnish Consulate, would cause complications. They left me matches, and I could have burnt myself alive, but instead of this I decided to use the matches to count the days of my hunger strike.

On the evening of the eighth day I had difficulty in getting to the pipe of the heating apparatus—someone apparently wanted to say something to me from the floor above. Weak as

I was, I leaned my head against the pipe and received the telegraphic message:

"Good-bye, Boris; sent to Turukhansk region:¹ transport goes to-morrow. Don't forget me; hold out to the end."

This was a last message from my friend Tchesnokoff. He had been allowed to die on the mainland.

In the course of my nine days' hunger strike I had become very weak, and much of the time I do not recollect at all. Some people came, and I distinctly remember two visits from the doctor and from Messing. Messing gave me paper and said that permission had been given for me to have an interview with one of the staff of the Consulate, but I must recover first, as I could not have an interview looking as I did then. I distinctly remember Messing asking the section director in a very loud voice:

"Was food sent from the Consulate yesterday for Citizen Cederholm?"

One remark of Messing's in particular gave me new courage:

"If you don't stop the hunger strike, I shall send you to the Haas prison hospital and you'll be artificially fed there."

Artificial feeding formed no part of my plans, but removal to the Haas prison hospital was entirely in accordance with my scheme.

To tell the truth, I myself did not know how to escape from the situation which had developed. It was impossible to stop the hunger strike, for the transport to the Solovky had not yet left, and it would be dangerous to put faith in Messing's promises.

However, I felt very bad, and my heart sometimes seemed to be giving out altogether. Should I hold out till I was removed to hospital? It would have been stupid to die when I had nearly reached my goal. But there was no way out, and, come what might, I must continue the hunger strike.

Early on the morning of the tenth day the door was opened as usual for dirt to be thrown out. As I was in the last stage of enfeeblement, the warder on duty, after opening the door, came into the cell, took the broom, and shouted to another

¹ In Northern Siberia, on the shores of the Arctic Ocean.

warder in the corridor: "Tell one of the workmen to bring a dustpan"; to which the reply came from the corridor: "There's not a man Jack here! They've all gone to hospital to be measured; they're going with the Solovetsky transport to-day."

The title of "workman" was given to those prisoners who had been transferred to the "common rooms" when the investigation of their "cases" was over and remained there until their sentence was received; during this time they voluntarily performed various tasks of a domestic nature in different sections of the prison.

"Being measured" meant having one's height measured and one's finger-prints taken, which was done in the case of all transported prisoners. The corridor warder's remark about the workmen having gone to hospital to be measured was joyful news to me, for it was clear that I was not to be taken with this transport. I must play the game to a finish; in other words, I must go to the prison hospital, for there some new opportunity of bettering my lot might be placed in my way.

The time until evening passed with torturing slowness, for I could not sleep from nervous tension, despite my weakness. About seven in the evening the door opened and two men came in with a stretcher, accompanied by a warder. I put on my overcoat with difficulty, assisted by these men, and was placed on the stretcher. I was taken along endless passages and galleries, now downstairs, now up, to the "main post". A few minutes more, and I was carried out on my stretcher into the prison courtyard, dimly illuminated by an electric lamp. Wet snow was falling, and the dark hood of a motor ambulance was visible not far off. Then I lost consciousness.

I was awakened by the bumping and rattling of the car. I was lying on a stretcher hanging from the roof on some strangely constructed kind of springs. Two armed soldiers sat side by side on the front seat. Through the clouded glass of the window I could see the endless line of electric lamps along the Nevsky Prospect, and the sight awakened an acute thirst for liberty in my breast—I had seen nothing but prison walls for seven months.

We drove for about half an hour, till at last the car stopped and my escort, getting out, began to call loudly for someone and knock on an entrance door. Some men at once drew me out of the ambulance and carried me into the hall of a large hospital building. It was very dirty, and after the fresh air the stuffy hospital smell of the unventilated hall gave me a feeling of nausea.

I was laid on the floor on my stretcher and my two armed guards handed me over in exchange for a receipt to two men in blue uniform overcoats.

A very old woman came out, wearing spectacles, in a dark overcoat thrown over her shoulders above a white blouse. The old lady seemed to be the doctor on duty. At her orders I was carried upstairs. We passed through a series of solid iron gratings with doors to match; there were armed sentries everywhere, who challenged us and let us pass through. We arrived at a room on the third floor; it was horribly dirty and the plaster on the walls and ceiling had entirely crumbled away. Here I was ordered to strip naked, and was given linen drawers and a linen shirt of revolting aspect. The shirt had only one sleeve—the other was cut off, and the drawers had no buttons or tapes. I was not given either socks or slippers, and when I asked what I should do without them they said that for the present I should be going nowhere, and that they would see about it later on.

“You must exist till to-morrow morning, citizen, and then we’ll think about socks and slippers,” was the sage decision of the man who gave me the clothing.

I was firmly resolved to exist till next morning at all costs. It was horribly cold in the building, and I was tortured with cold in my torn shirt and short, unbuttoned drawers. I was in the last stage of exhaustion, and must have presented a horrible appearance with my huge grey beard and my body blue with cold, with the bones projecting through the skin. While I was changing my clothes several persons had collected in the room one by one; two individuals of the most miserable aspect, in dressing-gowns, a boy in a dressing-gown, and three middle-

aged women, apparently of the lower class, with red bandages round their heads, dressed in the usual attire of the Russian servant.

One of the women asked me in very sympathetic tones:

"Can you go on your own legs, old chap,¹ or shall we carry you? It's not far to the next room."

Seeing that I trembled and looked first at my bare feet and then at the cold stone floor, she laughed, "He, he, one can see you're a softy", vanished, and reappeared in a minute bringing me a pair of huge birch-bark shoes. She placed me on my feet with the help of another woman, laughed again, and the two women took me under the arms and led me into a very large room containing five beds, one of which was made. The two women were hospital nurses. They laid me on the bed and put a rug over me.

"Lie there quietly," one of them said. "Don't make any noise or fuss. The Sister will be here in a minute and will put everything straight for you. It's comfortable here; you needn't be afraid."

The two nurses left the room, the door was shut, and I began to look about me. One electric light was burning, very feebly. The plaster had crumbled off all but one of the walls. Half the ceiling had collapsed and an enormous hole yawned in one corner. The floor was of wood, unpainted and fearfully dirty. I was lying on a straw mattress, over which was spread a not very clean sheet; the coverlet was incredibly prickly, and smelt very nasty.

The Sister came, a middle-aged woman with a very tired face and large and beautiful eyes. She placed a small tin jug and a small piece of white bread on a little table.

"If you are stopping the hunger strike," she began, "you must drink some warm milk—it's here, in this jug—and you can eat this piece of bread. Will you eat it?"

I felt no desire to eat, and I could even have said that the idea was disagreeable to me, strange as it may seem, seeing that I had fasted for ten days. But eat I must, for all the indications

¹ In Russian *staritchok* ("little old man").

pointed to my having won my game, and I must recover my strength. The Sister told me that if I stopped the hunger strike I should be moved to another room on the following day and would be kept in hospital for a month at least—that was the custom.

This woman inspired me with complete, unbounded confidence; even now I seem to see her wonderful eyes. When I had drunk a little sweetened milk and swallowed with an effort a few tiny pieces of white bread, I slept as I had not slept for a long time, despite the cold and the highly dubious coverlet.

The Sister came again early next morning, and with her help I moved into another room situated in the same corridor.

A new chapter of my prison life was beginning.

CHAPTER XXVI

Origin of the Haas Hospital—What the Hospital is Like—Management of the Hospital—Predominance of Criminal Element—Criminal Traditions and Customs—The Engineer Klein—My other Ward-mates—Klein's Experiences—A Political Causerie

THE PRISON HOSPITAL named after Dr. Haas,¹ usually called for short the Haas hospital, had been, not long before the war, a place of detention for persons belonging to the so-called privileged classes. Merchants, officials, and noblemen were sent there for short periods by order of the civil courts for various minor offences against "peace, quiet, and public decency".

During the war the place of detention as such was abolished, and the building was turned into a military hospital. After the Revolution had broken out, and the Bolsheviks had established themselves in power, the overcrowded state of the Petrograd prisons made the possession of a special prison hospital an absolute necessity, for the hospitals in the prisons could not accommodate the enormous number of prisoners who were seriously ill. Such was the origin of the Haas hospital.

The hospital building, four storeys high, is situated almost outside the city, not far from the Alexandro-Nevsky monastery, and the gilded cupolas of the monastery churches can be seen from the hospital windows. The whole building is surrounded by a high brick wall, and is guarded on all sides by sentries.

There are two long and broad corridors on each floor, cutting each at right angles so as to form a cross. At the point of junction of the corridors on each floor is a small circular landing, on which the corridor warder on duty is always to be found. From these landings staircases lead to the upper and lower floors; on the lower floor are two or three partitions of iron lattice-work, at which sentries are posted.

The doors of the wards open into the corridors. They are always open, and the patients can walk about quite freely in the

¹ A well-known Russian philanthropist who did much to improve conditions in the prisons.

corridor of their own floor, go into other wards, and ascend to the floors above. The stone floors of the corridors are very dirty and strewn with cigarette ends, spittle, and miscellaneous rubbish. The floors of the wards are of unpainted wood and are also very dirty. The size of the wards varies. In some there are two or three beds, in others as many as fifteen. The hospital has nominally three hundred beds, but is always inordinately overcrowded, to such an extent that the beds stand in serried ranks.

The windows of my room, fitted with thick iron bars, admitted the feeble light of a Petrograd autumn day. A man must have had very strong nerves not to be horrified by his surroundings. The air was impregnated with damp, the perspiration of dirty, diseased human bodies, and tobacco smoke. There were brown stains from crushed lice on the walls. Dust rose in clouds in the corridor, where lads of the criminal class were running about, playing and tormenting one another. I frequently heard the hysterical screams of epileptics, struggling in convulsions on the stone floor of the corridor, the disconnected mutterings of lunatics, the coughing of consumptives, and the death-rattle of the dying. A game of cards was going on in a corner, and there was a ceaseless flow of disgusting, filthy cursing.

Both doctors and Sisters do what they can to divide the patients according to their social position, but they are not always successful, for many circumstances have to be taken into consideration. The internal administration of the Haas hospital is in the hands of representatives of two authorities besides the medical staff—those of the National Commissariat for Justice (the so-called *Nadzor*, or supervision) and the Tcheka. It is by no means always that the arrangements of the medical staff coincide with the wishes of the representatives of the *Nadzor* or the demands of the Tcheka. In allocating the patients, the stage which the "case" has reached, the nature of the case, and the nature of the sentence inflicted have to be taken into account. If several patients belonging to the educated class happen to have been placed together in one room, the representative of the Tcheka is certain to notice it, and a rearrangement is begun

at once. The interests of justice are not served in the slightest degree by such a procedure, for the patients stroll about from ward to ward as they please, and in consequence of the mixing-up of the patients the wards are horribly dirty and there are constant disagreements, quarrels, and thefts.

The majority of the patients are of the criminal type, for persons belonging to the educated class are very seldom publicly tried. In the vast majority of cases they are tried administratively—that is, in their absence, by the College of the Tcheka—for their offences cannot be investigated even in a Soviet court on account of the lack of genuine evidence. The sentences of the Tcheka are very uniform—shooting, or transportation to Siberia, the Urals, or the Solovetsky concentration camp. The Petrograd and Moscow prisons, therefore, are filled for the most part with representatives of the criminal class. The Petrograd prison in the Shpalernaja Street (D.P.Z.¹) is entirely at the disposal of the Tcheka, but it is very seldom that anyone is sent from there to the Haas hospital. Patients are sent to this hospital only from the Petrograd criminal prisons; so that all the educated people whom I met among the patients had been sentenced for offences of an economic or service nature—giving or receiving bribes, waste, embezzlement, dealings in contraband, illegal trading, economic counter-revolution, and so on.

The criminal element in the Haas hospital was extremely variegated. It included all ages, from children to grey-bearded old men, and embraced every variety of the criminal industry, from pickpockets to hardened bandits and murderers. There is a sort of hierarchy among the criminal element, hallowed by prison tradition. The longer a man's sentence, and the more profitable his late "occupation" has been, the greater the authority he enjoys among his professional brethren. A special position among the criminal element is occupied by the so-called *shpana*. These are the pariahs of the criminal element; their ranks are filled by youths just starting on a career of theft, and by ne'er-do-weels who have failed to "make their way" in the world of crime and have kept themselves going by robbing

¹ See Chapter XXIII.

market trays. The *shpana* are in a state of slavish subjection to the professional criminals and execute petty commissions for them. Both in the prisons and in the Haas hospital the whole criminal element consider themselves masters of the situation, and the warders on duty, not to speak of the medical staff, endeavour to avoid any conflict with them, for they fear vengeance from outside, either from friends of the imprisoned criminals or from the prisoners themselves when they are let out.

In the Tcheka prison in the Shpalernaja Street I sometimes saw prisoners of the criminal type at exercise in the courtyard. I did not come into close contact with them, for the criminal element sent to the Tcheka prison are placed in special rooms. I often heard from my more experienced fellow-prisoners that in the prisons where people of the educated class are brought into contact with criminals, and in particular with the *shpana*, there is always a great deal of quarrelling and unpleasantness. The criminals exploit the "gentlemen", or, as they call them in their prison jargon, the "barons",¹ in every way, and hold some of them up to mockery. It was, therefore, quite natural that I regarded my new comrades with a certain uneasiness, and vainly endeavoured to decide from their appearance to what class of society they belonged.

As long as I was very weak and in bed all day long, I had no things of my own with me, and had, therefore, no particular cause for uneasiness. There were four of us in the ward in which I was placed. Two were still asleep, but the third was already sitting on his bed swinging his bare legs and regarding me with unconcealed curiosity. He was a very broad-shouldered man of amazingly strong build, with a face as round as a moon and a red beard long untouched by the razor. Fiery red hair escaped from a Turcoman cap embroidered with coloured silk. Noticing that the Sister brought me two biscuits and a jug of warm milk, the red-haired man winked ironically and, with a jerk of his head towards the biscuits, said in a small, thin voice quite out of keeping with his awe-inspiring figure:

"Aha! hm, hm! a hunger striker. It's astonishing how prison

¹ Russian *fraiery*, from the German *Freiherr*.

alters people's appearance. Please don't be offended, but I took you at first for an old professional criminal. Funny, isn't it?"

I was not offended, but I was anxious to know why he had at first taken me for a criminal and why he had afterwards suddenly decided that I was a hunger striker and not a criminal. The athlete was not slow to enlighten me.

"First let me introduce myself. My name is Klein; I am an engineer and technologist. The fact is that you have tattoo marks on your left arm, like all professional criminals; and our fellow-*bourgeois* are not often sent to the Haas. Then I saw that your tattooing had apparently been done in Japan. Well, and when they brought you the biscuits I saw at once by your fingers that I had been mistaken. Criminals never go on hunger strike—they're not in prison for long."

I told him who I was, and he seemed as pleased to make my acquaintance as I was to meet him. I could talk only with difficulty, for I was very weak and wanted to lie quiet. But I was horribly cold under the thin, prickly rug, for there was no heating and the wind blew in very cold through a broken pane of glass.

"To judge from your gloomy appearance," said Klein, "you don't like this place much. But this is only your first day; then you'll get accustomed to it. I'll get you a chit for two rugs in a minute, and, if you like, a sheet to put under the rug. Have you got any money? If you haven't, pay me back later on. I've got some."

With these words Klein left the room and in a few minutes returned with two quite decent rugs and two sheets.

Soon the head doctor came—a Jew named Gotz, a Communist—and his assistant Janovsky, also a Jew and also a Communist, accompanied by the Sister. Neither of the doctors examined me, but only asked me who I was and where I came from. When I stammered a few words about my illness, the head doctor stopped me with an irritated wave of his hand.

"We're all ill here," he said. "You ought to have gone to Biarritz or Ostend, and not to the proletariat. The ward doctor will come and see you; tell him about your illness."

When the doctors had gone away, I made the acquaintance of my other ward-mates. One of them, a bandy-legged fellow, was a workman; he was suffering from scurvy. He had been brought from the Solovky in August along with other prisoners suffering from scurvy and tuberculosis. Many hundreds of such cases are sent to Petrograd and Moscow from the Solovky during the summer for "treatment". A very limited number of these sick men go into hospital. The majority of the tuberculous and scurvy cases arriving from the Solovky are distributed among the Moscow and Petrograd prisons, and die there before their turn comes to go to hospital.

My other ward-mate was a Jew—a chemist bearing the curious name of Antimony. He was in the last stage of consumption, and there was every indication that the unfortunate chemist's days were numbered.

About eleven o'clock in the morning the old ward doctor came. One could guess at once that he was an old army doctor from his military bearing. I was not mistaken, for on reading my name the old doctor told me that he had once served in the division commanded by my uncle, who was shot by the Bolsheviks in the Kholmogory¹ concentration camp. The doctor examined me very carefully and said:

"The hunger strike is at the bottom of the trouble. If you've got money, you'll soon pull round. But you certainly ought not to go to the Solovky suffering from your illness. Unfortunately that's not our business; they won't ask my permission or yours."

When the doctor had gone, nurses began to bring round dinner to the wards. I was brought some thin oats porridge in a tin plate; the other patients were given meat soup, but with no meat in it. The food was served in a horribly dirty fashion. After the soup the nurses brought grilled fish cut up into small pieces, which they put straight on to our stools with their fingers, without even spreading paper for them to lie on. The nurses themselves were not remarkable for the cleanness of their hands, to say nothing of the stools and the patients.

The engineer Klein felt quite at home in prison. He had been

¹ On the River Dvina, near Archangel.

imprisoned for irregularities of some kind alleged to have been committed by him as an employee on the Turkestan railway, where he was in charge of some workshops. He had been sentenced to five years' imprisonment with strict isolation, and had already served one year in the Kresty prison in Petrograd. While engaged in forced labour there, he had lifted a heavy piece of machinery, trusting in his immense physical strength, and had strained himself. He had been in the Haas hospital for over a month, and so was *au courant* of everything that happened there. He was an incorrigible optimist, and extraordinarily kindly disposed towards everyone and everything. He often used to sum up the situation with a humour in which the tragic element was not lacking.

"We're sure to be let out soon," he said. "As regards myself, a petition for the reduction of my term of imprisonment has been sent in already. We shall go out, walk about a little, and then, probably, be sent to the Solovky. We shall all be there sooner or later, my dear sir; that is indispensable to a healthy proletarian social structure. You can't wash a black dog and make him white! I remember once, when I was on the Turkestan railway, the workshops committee sent for me. I went. And what do you think the fellows asked me? 'Comrade engineer, do you accept the ideology of the proletarian revolution?' The deuce! But what did it matter to me? I was a single man, my needs were not great, and I had nothing to fear. I told them I couldn't see any ideology or any revolution, but only a muddle. I was repairing rolling-stock and engines, and I would go on repairing them if they would give me a chance of working. They went away. Soon afterwards a commission arrived from Moscow. Look here, why is there so much rolling-stock unfit for use? Oh, it's Klein's fault, of course; try the rascal! I was tried, and my lack of 'proletarian ideology' finished me. Aren't they fools? And now the Turkestan railway is petitioning them to send me back.

"And mark you, my dear sir, everything is getting worse and worse year by year. Here are you gentlemen, 'distinguished foreigners', passing judgments on the evolution in Soviet

Russia. There is evolution, no doubt; they used to take people by the scruff of the neck in the public street and drag them off to the Tcheka, to any kind of temporary quarters, a cellar or an old vault. Revolutionary justice was carried out on the authority of a few drunken degenerates. A man was kept in the cellar for a few days and then either shot or released; to every man his lot. Now people are thrown into prison in hundreds every day all over Soviet Russia and shot in multitudes, or die miserably in the Solovky or Siberia. But it's all done without fuss or noise, by well-oiled State machinery. You see everywhere 'papers relating to case No. —' and a Tchekist in uniform.

"Isn't there evolution? There's electric lighting, the trams are running, militiamen stand at the street corners in what is almost the old police uniform. The houses are repaired outside, the restaurants are open, and there are even waiters in evening dress to serve you. The soldiers and officers only want the old shoulder badges to complete the picture. The factory chimneys are smoking, and they show foreigners a home of rest for workmen. There is evolution all along the line—I assure you that I am not joking. There is only one little 'but'. This proletarian ideology we've been talking about lies at the root of everything. What all you people won't realize is that 'Nep' exists only as far as is necessary—*po stolku po skolku*—as a temporary concession to political necessities. The European and American *bourgeoisies* are still strong, the Komintern's hopes of a world revolution have not been justified, and the struggle is clearly to be a prolonged one. It is of vital necessity to preserve Russia and her people as the laboratory and headquarters of Communism.

"All this has, for the time, been effected by 'Nep'. Even we, the old Russian *intelligentsia*, have found in 'Nep' an opportunity of applying our knowledge and experience. But we know perfectly well that they will only tolerate us just as long as they have need of our knowledge, and until a new *intelligentsia* has grown up which will gradually take our place. They tolerate us—but very few of us. Everything is in the hands of the Komintern and the Tcheka. If I tell you that things are worse now than

they were in '19, '20, '21, and '22, I have good grounds for saying so. The Tcheka has now acquired such power, and its apparatus has been perfected to such a degree, that when we remember the Tchekists of the militant Communism epoch, all the horrors of the past pale before what is going on now. But now everything has been evolutionized, and one must have eyes and ears to see, under the camouflage of industrial development, concessions, sanatoria for workmen, symphony concerts, sleeping-cars, and all the rest of the humbug, the ugly face of Sovietism, to see the tears invisible to all the world, and hear the groans of tortured people."

"Then, in your opinion, the Soviet power is growing stronger every day, and 'Nep' has saved the situation?" I asked Klein.

"No; wait a minute; I had not finished. The point is, that we are now in the first stage of 'Nep'. Of course, in comparison with the militant Communism epoch, the conditions of life have improved enormously. But don't forget that the masses in Russia are easily satisfied and accustomed to anything but comfort. And don't forget, either, that the most active element of the nation—the people between twenty and thirty years old—were children when the Revolution broke out. They have nothing with which to compare the conditions of to-day, for their ideas of the old régime are very vague. But excellent as 'Nep' may be, we cannot continue it long, for we simply cannot exist without Europe. And this, my dear fellow, is the dilemma in which the Komintern has involved itself. On the one hand, it is impossible to keep the stabilized *tchervonets* at a fixed rate indefinitely, for our industry will come to a standstill if we do not receive new machinery and half-finished goods from abroad. On the other hand, there can be no question of a return to the policy of militant Communism. But the most important point of all is that the peasants and the masses generally have shown themselves absolutely unreceptive to Marxist ideas, and this is the stumbling-block on which the Komintern will break its neck sooner or later. I don't know whether this will happen suddenly or by the gradual introduction into the Soviets of elements alien to the ideology of the Third International, but

I am convinced of one thing—that this process is perceptible already.”

This conversation with Klein I have not, of course, recorded word for word ; in fact, the above is a *résumé* of several conversations I had in prison, not only with Klein, but with other people of the same social position and the same views.

CHAPTER XXVII

Advantages of Hospital Life—The Estimable Yashka—Honour among Criminals—Victims of Cocaine—"Administrative" and Ordinary Prisoners—Hospital Sisters' Plight—Difficulties of Escape—Soviet Theory of Crime

MY STAY IN HOSPITAL could not be long, and I must do something to get out of prison and home to Finland. In spite of the revolting conditions, the hospital had many advantages over the Tcheka prison. In the first place, I could keep in touch with the Consulate without interference. In the second place, if I was allowed an interview with one of my countrymen, these interviews would be less strictly controlled in hospital than in the Tcheka prison. I was sure that I should have an interview during the next few days, as the Consulate already knew, though not officially, of my hunger strike and the sentence inflicted on me. But I wanted to send my friends further news of myself and tell them that I was in the Haas hospital. It was dangerous to have recourse to the help of the lower personnel of the hospital without feeling my way carefully, although I had already received an offer of assistance from one of the nurses.

Pretending that I wished to draw money from my friends to buy food, I asked Klein how I could transmit to them a request to send me money. Klein thought for a moment or two, smiled, and said:

"Anyone else could have done it in two minutes. He'd have written a postcard, and the thing would have been done. But that won't do in your case, as you're a Tcheka prisoner, and it might make trouble for you. You see, you've not been tried in court, but sentenced to transportation by administrative order, and that's even worse than being sentenced to death by a court. We must ask Yashka. Only Yashka can arrange it—nobody else."

"Who's Yashka?"

"Yashka is a notorious bandit and highway robber. He's a highly esteemed personage here. He has been convicted

twelve times, and at the present moment he has had a death sentence commuted to ten years' strict isolation for the third time. He'll probably be let out again soon, for he's been in prison nearly a year. He's a friend of mine; I was with him in the Kresty and worked with him in the prison workshop. He's here now because he's been sent for inspection by a medical commission with a view to his being released before his sentence expires as 'suffering from neurasthenia with symptoms of degeneration'. Ha, ha, ha! This isn't your rotten old Europe. There's quite a different view of crime here, my friend. Just mark my words, Yashka will be out in two months, he'll commit a few assaults and robberies, and in four months he'll be in gaol again. That's the proletarian ideology. If you like, I'll introduce you to him. He has sure and absolutely reliable connections here and in all the prisons. He'll put you in touch with anybody you like in less than no time."

I was a novice as regarded the criminal life of the prisons, and so I asked Klein:

"But is this Yashka to be trusted? You say yourself that he's a thief, bandit, and murderer."

"It's clear that you're new to prison life. The only people you can't trust are the *shpana* and our brothers of the *intelligentsia*. The *shpana* will sell you for a packet of tobacco, and with the *intelligentsia* you may always come across a traitor, for the Tcheke and the prison administration recruit the so-called *seksoty*¹ or *liagavy*² among the prisoners of the educated class. One of 'ours', which means in prison slang a fully qualified criminal, will never give you away. They have their own code of prison etiquette. In short, when you desire to avail yourself of the estimable Yashka's services, tell me, and I'll arrange the whole thing for you. Yashka is well disposed towards me—in the first place, because people of that sort are always impressed by physical strength; in the second place, because I got him into the prison workshop and, thanks to me, he never did a stroke of work. In the third place—well, how shall I put it? I'm a

¹ Abbreviation of *sekretnye sotrudniki* (secret collaborators).

² Lit. "setters", a nickname of Tcheke spies; cf. Chapter XI.

Bohemian in my habits and an anarchist in my convictions. Yashka and his crowd feel it, and sympathize with me. Look what I've got to-day."

Klein showed me, with a wicked, sly grin, a little box like those in which powders are sold in chemists' shops.

"What's that?" I asked.

"That, my dear sir, is nothing more or less than ten grammes of 'koko', or, as you would call it in European, cocaine. I have been fond of this drug since I was nineteen, but I don't abuse it, I only allow myself a small quantity twice a week. And sometimes I stimulate my brains for ten days on end—as long as the stuff lasts. Don't be afraid; when I take it I get very talkative, but I'm perfectly harmless. I love talking politics. It's a pity you don't take it; I love taking it with other people, especially with people of my own type. What thoughts pass through one's mind! How clear and logical everything is! Antimony loves it, too."

Klein jerked his head in the direction of the consumptive chemist, who was lying in one corner of the room. At that very moment Antimony rose from his bed, groaning and moaning, put on his dressing-gown, or rather his rags, and went out into the corridor. From time to time patients from other wards came into ours. Nearly all were bare-footed and horribly dirty. All wore torn, stained dressing-gowns, often with one sleeve gone or the tails cut off. I was told later that the patients always cut off pieces of material from their dressing-gowns and make slippers out of them, as when they are sent back from the hospital to prison many of them have nothing to put on their feet.

Late in the evening, with Klein's help, I went to the hospital lavatory. What I saw there is indescribable. It was a very large room, about thirty-five yards square, dimly lighted by an electric lamp. Along one of the walls were seven or eight seats, in such a state of filth that no person who was in the least particular would ever have thought of using them. The whole floor was swimming in urine, and the smell of ammonia made it hard to breathe. The weak patients satisfied the demands of nature

on the floor itself. Along the wall opposite the seats was a large copper stand covered with verdigris, with washing basins. The receptacle under the basins was one-third full of blood, spittle, and even excrement. The nurses empty the chamber-pots of the weak patients into this receptacle.

Just as we went into the lavatory I noticed a small group of people standing in a corner. Two, apparently scurvy cases, were on crutches; they were either screening or giving some kind of advice to the third, a boy of about seventeen with a very pleasant face. The lad was evidently suffering from some venereal disease, and was aggravating his sores by applying a lighted cigarette to them. I was told later that prisoners, especially the *shpana*, stop at nothing in their desire to contract some illness or prolong the treatment. They drink a strong infusion of tobacco, stick dirty pins into their flesh, aggravate their sores with lighted cigarettes, and so on.

Thanks to the kindness of one of the Sisters, I was allowed to use the lavatory of the medical staff. I had to do this with great caution, for the smallest privilege granted to a *bourgeois* is noticed by the patients and brings in its train a whole series of open and secret denunciations to the Tcheke—denunciations of the doctors, the administration, and even the Tchekists detailed for supervision duty in the hospital.

Some of the doctors and Sisters treated all the patients with the same care, making no distinction between those of *bourgeois* and those of proletarian origin. The situation of the patients belonging to the *intelligentsia* was, nevertheless, very much worse than that of the rest of the prisoners. But there was an enormous difference between the rules applied to the "administrative" prisoners and those applied to the prisoners who had been sentenced by the courts. The latter, even if of *bourgeois* origin, had the right to be liberated before the expiry of their term on representations to that end being made by the prison administration or in case of illness. Administrative prisoners were deprived of all rights of every kind; they might not even submit a petition for pardon to the Supreme Council of People's Commissaries.

The more closely I studied my position, the clearer it became to me that I had no chance whatever of being liberated alive. The most energetic support the Finnish Government could give me might meet with an insuperable obstacle in the form of the almighty Tcheka—a State within the State, before which even the People's Commissaries bowed their heads.

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I had now been in the Haas hospital for three days, and the philosopher Klein had proved to be right: I had begun to grow accustomed to my surroundings and to adapt myself to the routine of the place. With the help of the money I had borrowed from Klein, and sundry machinations, I managed to obtain the use of the bathroom in the evenings. The bathroom was far from new or clean, but at any rate it was better than washing in the lavatory.

All three of my ward-mates "indulged", i.e. took cocaine, almost continuously. They obtained it through Yashka and an habitual thief nicknamed "The Elephant". The latter was in the next ward. The result was that there was a ceaseless flow of disconnected but animated chatter in our ward, all three men talking at the same time. Klein usually discoursed on politics or art, and his talk was always most sensible, charming, and logical. Antimony told stories about his family or wrote endless letters and petitions, uttering every sentence in a loud voice. The workman Krotoff, who had the scurvy, always talked on religious subjects or prayed aloud.

The doctor came to see us once a day and the Sister on duty came several times a day. The situation of hospital doctors and Sisters in Soviet Russia is incredibly bad. In our prison hospital there were three Sisters to each floor. They were obliged to be at the hospital from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. In addition, each Sister was on duty for the whole twenty-four hours every other day. A Sister's pay is 26 roubles (about £2 5s.) a month, from which about 6 roubles are deducted monthly for various compulsory payments—to her professional union, to different

charitable organizations, for the victims of the *bourgeois* terror in Europe, for the arrangement of demonstrations, and so on.

The Sisters are extremely poorly housed, for their lack of means compels them to live in unrepaired houses in outlying parts of the city. They cannot even change their profession, for by the laws of the Soviet Socialist Republic persons of all professions are registered at a so-called labour exchange and their professional bureau. No individual or undertaking will engage an employee without the permission of these organizations. All citizens of Soviet Russia without exception are compelled to possess a so-called work-book, in which, along with a quantity of other information, the profession of the owner of the book is stated and, according to his profession, the category of salary to be paid him. There are seventeen categories of salary in every profession, and in the medical profession Sisters occupy one of the lowest categories. A hospital nurse receives 18 roubles (rather more than 30s.) a month; a ward doctor, after the compulsory deductions have been made, 42 roubles. A prison warder, on the other hand, who has to do twenty-four hours' duty every three days and is perfectly free for two whole days, receives 50 roubles a month and more, according to the class to which he belongs.

The hardest work of all falls to the lot of the Sisters and doctors, since, despite the existence of semi-starvation they lead, the disgusting technical conditions of their work, and the exceedingly variegated and turbulent crowd of patients they have to deal with, they work with a full consciousness of their sacred duty. There are a large number of degenerates among the criminal patients, almost without exception drug-takers. Many of them display the most incredible eccentricities, simulate attacks, and behave most impudently to the medical staff, and even to the supervising officials. And yet all the time I was in the hospital I never saw the doctors or Sisters lose their self-control for a moment, or cease to treat the patients gently. I never saw any doctors or Sisters of the Soviet school; but I feel that for such discipline and sense of duty much more is

needed than professional knowledge hurriedly acquired in schools penetrated by the "proletarian ideology".

Noticing the more than casual behaviour of the sick prisoners towards the warders, a thing which I had never seen in the Tcheka prison, I often wondered why no one escaped from the Haas hospital. In view of the great facilities the imprisoned criminals had at their disposal, thanks to their cunning, their extensive connections, and the way in which they intimidated the supervising officials, it always seemed to me that they could have obtained all the requisites for an escape from friends outside without any trouble whatever. But when I had acquired a closer insight into the life of the place, and had talked with several of the most prominent and highly skilled representatives of the criminal world, I realized that, in the first place, it was not nearly so simple a matter as I thought to escape from the hospital; and, secondly, there was no sense in doing so. A warder walked along the corridor from time to time, and the doors of the wards were wide open. The windows had stout iron bars, and two armed soldiers marched up and down on each side of the building all day and all night.

One of the professional criminals, in conversation with whom I had touched on the possibility of escaping, said to me:

"There's nothing to be got by bolting. In the first place, there are a lot of *shpana* and 'barons' here. While you're making your plans, they'll talk. They're a rotten crowd. And it means getting a lot of our own fellows into trouble with the Tcheka. The Tcheka doesn't go to work with kid gloves on, you know; it'll lay hold of our fellows who are here and shoot the lot of them. No, it's better to be under the *Narkomjust*.¹ It never keeps our sort in prison long. If one gets ten years, one's kept in for two years at the most. If you want to bolt, bolt from the settlement—then you're not letting anyone else down, at any rate."

By "settlement" he meant a "prisoners' settlement". These are a special kind of agricultural colonies, to which offenders of the criminal type are transferred to serve a certain part of their

¹ *Narodnyi kommissariat justitsii* (People's Commissariat for Justice).

term of strict imprisonment. Offenders sentenced, for example, to ten years' strict isolation are generally sent to one of these settlements at the end of the first year. The selection of offenders for transfer is, of course, influenced by their personality and origin. Prisoners of non-proletarian origin, and charged with offences of a service or economic nature, are regarded as an "element dangerous to society", and are treated much more strictly. Professional criminals are regarded as "harmful to society", and the theory is held that they are a product of the capitalistic system and, therefore, that in course of time crime is bound to disappear in Soviet Russia. Soviet criminal procedure and legislation and the Soviet penitentiary system are based on this view.

I do not presume to criticize this system, not being a specialist on the subject, but I do not think the facts speak well, either for the system or for the Soviet régime at all. I will not take as examples in support of my opinion the Tcheka prisons and the various concentration camps, filled to overflowing with prisoners, which are administered by the Tcheka. The tens of thousands of "administrative" prisoners in these places have been flung into prison simply on suspicion of political unreliability, frequently based on such slender foundations as noble or mercantile origin, or acquaintance with some foreigner.

But quite apart from the Tcheka prisons, all the prisons in Soviet Russia are overcrowded. Even the so-called "special isolator", or, to use its more simple designation, the Kresty, where the prisoners are supposed to be kept in separate cells, is so overcrowded that four or five criminals are imprisoned in each of these "single" cells.

All the professional criminals I met in the Haas hospital were habitual offenders who had been sentenced many times. I often heard them utter the phrase "I give my proletarian word of honour to lead a hard-working life" with cynical irony, both in conversation with me and in talking among themselves. "My proletarian word of honour" is the formula which every habitual criminal pronounces on being released before the expiry of his term.

The Soviet Government's view of criminals and its treatment of them are marked by the same features which characterize every branch of its administration—naïve humbug, doctrinairism, form without substance, intellectual dishonesty, and empty phraseology, remote from the real needs of life.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Interview with My Friends—Reception-room Scenes—Finland's Efforts on My Behalf—Iron Tcheka Discipline—"Lynchings" in Hospital—Sold by a Subordinate—My Friend "The Elephant"—Tragedy of a "Nepman"

ACCORDING TO THE PRISON RULES, sick prisoners might receive food supplies from their relations and friends outside twice a week. A patient might see one of his relations for half an hour once a week, on Thursdays. The only exceptions were those prisoners whose cases were still being investigated and those "administrative" prisoners to whom the Tcheka for some reason thought it undesirable to grant an interview.

Needless to say, I was in a great state of excitement when the day of the interview arrived. Imagine what it had meant to see no one but prisoners and prison warders for seven months! to have no news whatever of the family I had left in Finland, to undergo sudden arrest, all the horrors of the "special floor" and the discomforts of the hunger strike!

The warder on duty called out the names of different prisoners in a loud voice, and the party of ten or fifteen men went downstairs two by two under the supervision of a special warder. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon, and I had already begun to lose hope, when suddenly something like my name echoed along the corridor. When it was called for a second time, there was no longer any doubt, but heavens, how they had distorted my name! "Cindergol, Cindergol!" the warder bellowed.

At last we were all marshalled in pairs and were escorted down to the first floor. We passed through a barred door guarded by a sentry, turned to the right, and entered a room about twenty yards square, crammed full of people. The room was divided into two parts by a wooden barrier, breast-high; the visitors were on the farther side of this barrier. The noise of voices raised in talk was deafening. The eyes of many of the

women visitors were red with weeping. It was fearfully cold, for the entrance door on the other side of the partition was wide open; through it I could see a final barred door, with a sentry on guard, and beyond a fragment of the outside world, as the main door was open also. I caught a fleeting glimpse of all this as I entered the interview room, searching vainly for my visitors. Yes, there they were, both of them! How fresh, rosy-cheeked, and smartly dressed they were! But the two employees of our Consulate-General, Mr. T. and Mrs. Tch., apparently did not recognize me; several times their eyes fell upon my face and passed on again, as they sought with anxious care for "Colonel Cederholm" among the crowd of dirty, ragged people. Nor was it surprising; for who could have recognized in that enfeebled old man, with a huge grey beard, dressed in a dirty, tattered dressing-gown, the "colonel" who had sometimes, at the Consulate, been made the subject of good-natured chaff on account of his fondness for smart clothes?

We shook hands in silence; our emotion prevented us from uttering a word for a moment or two. When I saw tears in my friends' eyes for the first time for seven months, a lump came into my own throat, and I was not far from bursting into tears myself. To my right a very fat old man, in a smart shirt under an incredibly filthy, ragged dressing-gown, was caressing a little girl. The child was held up over the partition by a good-looking young woman, apparently the fat old man's daughter. I found out later that the old man's name was Goldman and that he had been a banker. On my left stood an old man, also evidently of the educated class, wiping away the tears and stroking the cheek of an old lady dressed in mourning.

The "estimable Yashka" leaned heavily upon me from behind. He was in all his glory—well shaved, with an impeccable hair-parting, in a quite clean dressing-gown which afforded a glimpse of his thickly tattooed chest. Yashka was bellowing at the top of his voice as he conducted an animated conversation in thieves' jargon with two young girls of the most questionable appearance who were standing behind my friends, and with another most suspicious-looking individual. His proximity and the

general noise enabled me to discuss my affairs fully and frankly with my friends.

Having ascertained from them that all was well with my family, I hastened to tell them the whole story of my arrest in every detail, and begged them to do everything possible to prevent my being sent to the Solovky and to get the Finnish Government to secure my liberation. As I had supposed, all the efforts of our diplomatic mission to obtain from the Soviet authorities even a brief report of my case had been without result, apart from two or three typical official letters, stating that it was being dealt with by the "section for affairs of special importance" of the Tcheka and that "when the case was concluded" the result would be communicated to our Legation in Moscow. An inquiry by our Minister as to the date at which my case would be tried elicited no reply at all from the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, the Tcheka having refused to give any information whatever about my case.

I narrated in an earlier chapter how, thanks to a lucky chance and the friendly solicitude of my prison companion, I had been able to let the Consulate know of the hunger strike and the sentence passed upon me. This news had been sent on at once to our Legation in Moscow by special messenger. The Legation, without mentioning the news it had received, demanded insistently that the Soviet authorities should say where I was and in what state of health I was. This time an answer was received very quickly, and our Consul-General, having ascertained through official channels that I was in the prison hospital, asked permission for two representatives of the Consulate to have an interview with me.

None of this was particularly agreeable news for me, as so far nothing definite was known as to the possibility of my being released. The only consolation was that an order for the postponement of my departure for the Solovky had been secured from the Foreign Office. How far this order would be treated as binding by the Tcheka no one could say. I must arm myself with patience. This was the upshot of my first interview with my fellow-countrymen.

The warder in charge of the reception kindly allowed me to keep a basket of food and warm underclothing which they had brought me. The parting from my friends was very painful, and it was particularly disagreeable to be searched and felt all over by the warder on duty. As though intentionally, my friends were held up by the crowd of departing visitors on the farther side of the barrier. I saw the pained expression on their faces when, in giving me a last look and sending me a farewell smile, they were involuntary witnesses of this humiliating procedure. I was standing with raised hands endeavouring to fix my eyes on a point in space, and noticed that my friends turned away quickly and looked straight in front of them.

I asked myself for the thousandth time, "Why am I enduring all these tortures—why?" I could not help recalling the curious title of a story I had once read in my childhood, "Held captive by monkeys".

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"You're beginning to grow your feathers again," Klein said to me, when he saw me examining the contents of my basket and changing into woollen underclothing. "But look here, I advise you to hide your underclothes well under your dressing-gown, for one has to have special permission to wear one's own underclothes, and you, being an administrative prisoner, certainly won't get permission. Did you give the warder at the reception anything?"

"I did; a kilo of first-rate butter."

"Oh, now I understand. I see you've become an expert. But all the same, that wouldn't have gone down at the Shpalernaja; they'd have given you two years extra at the Solovky for such an attempt at palm-greasing. The Tcheke staff there is well disciplined. If anything's not just as it should be—a bullet through the head, and promotion for the informer."

Klein's observation regarding the excellent discipline of the Tcheke personnel was perfectly correct. In one of the top-floor wards of our hospital were four Tchekists suffering from scurvy, who had been sent from the Solovky for treatment. They had

been placed all together in one ward. The situation of Tchekists or agents of the criminal police who, by a turn of Fortune's wheel, find themselves in prison is tragic in the extreme. Although the prison administration endeavours to allocate them in such a way as to isolate them as far as possible from the rest of the prisoners, it is not always able to protect them from jeers, blows, and other cruel manifestations of hatred from the criminals. Prisoners of the educated class, of course, take no part in the persecution of the "setters". The best thing an educated prisoner can do is to get away from the scene of the lynching as quickly as possible; for a most searching inquiry, directed by agents of the Tcheka, will follow, and any member of the *intelligentsia* who may chance to be mixed up in a business of the kind, even as a witness, will suffer severely for it. The Tcheka regards the *intelligentsia* as guilty of everything, everywhere and always.

The opportunities for a lynching are more than sufficient, especially in a prison hospital. The "setters" are waylaid in dark corners in the corridors and boiling water containing various kinds of acids flung in their faces. Favourable opportunities are sought to empty teapots full of boiling water on their heads as they go upstairs or down. When the prisoners assemble in crowds for lectures (of which I will speak later on), the Tchekists are pricked with pins dipped in the suppurations from the sores of patients with venereal diseases.

It is not always possible to detect the real authors of a "lynching" of this kind, for the hospital staff often keeps such cases from the knowledge of the Tcheka. But sooner or later the Tcheka gets to know of it, either by the sufferers lodging a complaint or by the lynching resulting in death. Many of the participators make haste to get out of hospital and scatter themselves over the prisons of the city, but that does not prevent the Tcheka from laying hold of the first persons it comes across and punishing them severely "as an example", even by shooting.

The Tchekists in our hospital had been sentenced to ten years' imprisonment in the Solovetsky camp, and had been there for a year. When I went to the surgical room to be ban-

daged I was able to see the state to which men are reduced by a year in the Solovetsky camp. Those skeletons, with skin drawn tightly over their bones, toothless mouths, watery eyes, and twisted limbs, had once been sturdy fellows serving as warders at the Shpalernaja prison. They had all been sentenced to death by shooting, and their sentence had been commuted to ten years' imprisonment in the Solovky. What had they done to deserve so cruel a punishment? One of them had received from a prisoner a bribe of five roubles and a note for a relative outside. The note was found in the warder's possession, and one of the prisoners, wishing to gain the favour of the authorities, denounced him. The offences of the other three Tchekists were of much the same kind.

Besides the regular Tchekists, there were always a few of the so-called *seksoty* (secret agents) among the inmates of the hospital. The examining judges recruit secret agents from among the persons under arrest, generally when examining them; various privileges, including a reduction of the term of imprisonment, are offered to a man if he will give evidence against his comrades.

A large number of the *seksoty* have been secret agents of the Tcheke before their imprisonment, serving at the same time in some capacity in some Soviet office or business concern. In one of the wards in our corridor was an engineer named Lugin, who before his arrest had been an employee in the Putiloff works. He had been sentenced "administratively" to banishment to the Narym region of Siberia. Lugin's "offence" consisted in his having corresponded with his cousin, who was living somewhere in the Caucasus under an assumed name because he had been an officer in one of the White Armies in 1920. Lugin told me that his banishment to the Narym region was a great act of clemency, for he had originally been sentenced to imprisonment in the Solovetsky camp, and his sentence was mitigated as the result of a mass petition from the workmen in the factory and his own services as an employee. He had been "sold" by a subordinate, one of the draughtsmen in the technical office, Gromoff by name. Gromoff, by an

ironical decree of Fate, had shortly afterwards been prosecuted himself for trading in cocaine, and was in prison at the time of which I am writing.

This man Gromoff had been installed in Lugin's flat as a lodger, along with several other people of the most heterogeneous description, because the engineer occupied a flat with five rooms, i.e. more than four times the space prescribed for him by Soviet law. Gromoff's room was next to that occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Lugin, and he had probably listened to the conversation of husband and wife, the door between the rooms being a thin one. The result was that the Tcheke one night made a surprise raid on the flat. A letter from Lugin's brother was found and a "case" concocted. The brother was shot, and the husband and wife arrested for "failure to give information". Lugin knew nothing of his wife's fate beyond the fact that she had been transported to the Urals. He had been sent to hospital with appendicitis and had been operated on not long before. Gromoff was probably acting as a *seksot* in the prison where he was confined, and had every chance of soon being released.

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One day, when I was walking up and down the corridor with the ex-banker Goldman and conversing with him on the vicissitudes of human life, I noticed that the habitual thief nicknamed "The Elephant" was hanging about in a suspicious manner near the door of my ward. I had made The Elephant's acquaintance through his once asking me to "sub-edit" for him a petition "to the All-Highest", as he expressed it, i.e. to the President of the Council of People's Commissaries. He had drafted the petition in the most eloquent language; it was liberally adorned with such phrases as "my proletarian word of honour", "an honest hard-working life", and even "to eat my bread in the sweat of my brow". Klein and I put all this flowery nonsense into proper literary shape, and endeavoured to the length of three pages to convince the People's Commissaries of The Elephant's full and sincere repentance. This episode had

made The Elephant as attached to me as a dog, and every evening he brought a teapot of hot water to my ward for me to wash with.

Observing that his promenade outside my ward was causing me some surprise, he bowed politely, though clumsily, and said:

"Continue your stroll, citizen, continue your stroll. I'm watching here to see that the *shpana* don't take your things by mistake, for Alexander Arturovitch and Antimony have had too much cocaine, and the man with scurvy is asleep."

Such care and solicitude were most touching. Having met a number of different criminals in prison, I am bound to say, speaking generally, that I often, contrary to all expectation, found very many attractive qualities in them—loyalty to their word, not a trace of impudence, an unfailing courtesy, and an inexhaustible fund of humour. Once, indicating Goldman as he walked steadily up and down the corridor, The Elephant said:

"Isaac Gregorievitch and I are both victims of the capitalist system. We can neither of us get on without banks."

Goldman's situation was intolerable. He had succeeded by cunning manœuvres in concealing a very substantial sum in gold when the banks were nationalized, and when "Nep" made its appearance he returned to business. After several years of militant Communism everything was in a state of collapse and ruin, including the houses. All immovable property had become the property of the communal economy department, known as the *Otkomkhoz*,¹ and this body had the task of restoring all the ruined buildings—a task that far exceeded its powers. There were no experts available, nor were there resources for a proper organization of the work of repair. It was therefore decided to call in the help of private initiative.

Goldman was one of the first who put faith in the durability of "Nep", and he concluded a long-term contract with the *Otkomkhoz*. He was bound by this contract to put three five-storied buildings in the very heart of the business quarter of Petrograd, near the Hay Market, in a complete state of repair. He was given the right, when the houses were put in order, to

¹ *Otdiel kommunalnogo khozaistva.*

let flats and business premises in them to whomever he liked and at whatever rent he thought fit to ask. By the expenditure of much money and energy all three houses were put into first-rate condition, and the development of "Nep" enabled Goldman to let all the flats very profitably. But Goldman's prosperity was not of long duration. One fine day he was summoned to the economic section of the Tcheka and asked:

"What member of the *Otkomkhoz* did you bribe to conclude a contract so profitable to yourself, and how much did you pay him?"

No proofs that Goldman was able to adduce were of the least avail, and he was only allowed to remain at liberty on his giving a guarantee of 100,000 roubles.

The Tcheka took the investigation of the "case" in hand with its usual vigour. At several interrogations the examining judge pointed out to Goldman that the simplest way of bringing the unpleasant affair to an end was for him to give up the houses and voluntarily cancel the contract with the *Otkomkhoz*. As the examining judge put it, it came to this—that in any event the Tcheka would decide the case against Goldman, and as there was no positive proof of his guilt, he would be obliged to deal with the case administratively, i.e. refer it to the Central College of the Tcheka.

According to Clause 114 of the criminal code, the minimum penalty for giving bribes is three years' imprisonment, and the maximum penalty shooting, *plus* the confiscation of the guilty person's entire property. Goldman knew perfectly well that if his case reached the Moscow Tcheka there was no hope for him, as the Tcheka always imposes the maximum penalty. As the Tcheka had resolved not to let its prey slip out of its hands, and there was, therefore, no hope of the case being sent for public trial, he decided . . . to bribe the examining judge. The money was accepted, and next day Goldman was arrested, notwithstanding his bail. There was now concrete proof, and the whole case was sent to the public prosecutor. An "exemplary trial" for the benefit of the proletariat was held, at which the malignancy of the *bourgeoisie* and the incorruptibility of the

Tcheka were clearly demonstrated. The object was attained. Goldman was sentenced to death and his entire property confiscated, but as a mark of special clemency the death sentence was commuted to ten years' strict isolation in the Kresty prison. This prison being as overcrowded as all the others, Goldman had to spend three months in a cell intended for one man in the company of five others. An elderly man—he was fifty-eight years old—and suffering from enlargement of the heart, he was at last unable to endure this torment any longer, and fell ill. The houses Goldman had repaired were once more placed under the management of the *Otkomkhoz*, and his confiscated funds were used to repair the prison in the Shpalernaja Street.

“And tell me, please, to whom shall I appeal? Where shall I find justice?” the old man used often to ask me, on the conclusion of his interminable recital.

Goldman died suddenly of heart failure three days before I left the Haas hospital.

CHAPTER XXIX

Our Educator—The Thieves' Opportunity—I Apply for a Medical Certificate—My Hopes Dashed—Moved to a New Ward—The Government and the Students—A Red Soldier—Tsarist Officers in the Red Army—Education and the Proletariat

IN OUR PRISON HOSPITAL, as in all prisons under the management of the *Narkomjust*, there was an "educational section"; but, like everything in Soviet Russia except the Tcheka, it existed in name only.

The educational section is presided over by a so-called "educator". This individual, in person and through his assistants, carries on conversations of an educative nature with the prisoners, watches over their gradual reformation and keeps a special diary in which the characteristics of each prisoner are noted. This is how the education of criminals is supposed to be carried out, according to theoretical Soviet plans.

In reality, however, the procedure is as follows. The whole body of sick prisoners, about four hundred strong, was under one educator, who had no assistants at all. The man whose duty it was to reform our criminal minds and make us useful citizens of the U.S.S.R. was one Sergei Afanasievitch Kotomkin. This excellent man came to the hospital two evenings a week, always very drunk, and was received with loud cries from the *shpana* of "Sak! Sak has come!", on which he invariably uttered these words in a loud bass voice:

"Be silent, criminal element. I beg the *bourgeoisie* not to intrigue."

Sak was a tall and stout man, who looked about forty or forty-five. He wore the dark blue prison uniform of the *Narkomjust*; his cap was always on the back of his head and his overcoat thrown over one shoulder only. Our educator went round all the floors, after which he collected all the patients on one floor, no matter which, who were capable of movement, in a serried mass, and began to "educate" them.

I should have difficulty in quoting verbatim all that was said

by Kotomkin for our education; it was an absolutely disconnected torrent of words. I only remember the stereotyped beginning of every one of his "speeches". Kotomkin ran his eye over his audience, cleared his throat, and began:

"Comrades, you are all rogues and parasites! Possibly the intellectuals here may not be rogues, but that they're parasites—that is a matter of course. We must work, because if we are the proletariat, we must prove it by our acts." . . .

And so on. He went on talking like this for ten minutes, after which he conversed in a more intimate style with individual prisoners, principally with the *shpana*, for whom our educator had a special liking.

When these educative talks were being held, our wards and possessions were left unguarded, and enterprising members of the *shpana* from other floors used to raid our wards and make a clean sweep of all parcels they found. I myself was robbed twice, after which I had the idea of conveying all my property, on lecture days, to the top floor and leaving it under the protection of the "estimable Yashka".

My affairs had reached a stage which could have been described in the language of the war-time *communiqués*: "Quiet at the front. Situation unchanged".

I had an interview regularly every week with representatives of our Consulate. They gave me news of my family by word of mouth and advised me to be patient. The negotiations for my release were proceeding with extreme slowness. The circumstance which complicated matters was that I was under the Tcheka as having been sentenced by administrative order, which hampered the proceedings of the Foreign Office.

As I was suffering from a chronic complaint included in the list of the illnesses which entitled a prisoner to be released before the expiry of his term, I had at all costs to obtain a certificate to this effect from the medical commission of the Haas hospital and let the Consulate have a copy of the certificate. The possession of such a document would greatly facilitate the efforts of our Legation to get me released.

A medical inspection with a view to the liberation of sick prisoners before the expiry of their term was held once a month. In a memorandum addressed to the head doctor I narrated the history of my illness and asked that I might be included in the list of patients to be inspected by the medico-judicial commission. After a preliminary examination of the most elaborate kind by the head doctor and his assistant, my request was acceded to.

At last inspection day came, and all those who were to go before the commission were assembled on the round landing on the top floor, near the room where the commission was sitting.

Every kind of illness was represented. Tuberculosis, epilepsy, and various acute forms of neurasthenia were the commonest complaints. I felt myself at a disadvantage amid this crowd of walking corpses. A stay of almost a month in hospital at my own expense had all but removed all traces of the sufferings I had undergone. But I did not think it would serve any purpose to have recourse to simulation. Nearly all the patients simulated—naïvely, stupidly, clumsily. The only ones who did not were the consumptives—for only persons hopelessly ill with this complaint are allowed to appear before the commission. As a rule, a good half of them die before the new date of their release comes round, as the certificate of the commission has to pass through the hands of several authorities, and this takes two or three months. Many of the “neurasthenics” had taken excessive quantities of cocaine or veronal. They pottered about the landing with an absent air and a sad, vacant, imbecile grin.

The “intellectuals” were represented by a few consumptives and myself. I was much surprised to see that a half-paralysed old priest, whom I had seen in one of the third-floor wards, was not among the patients to be inspected. Like myself, he was to be transported to the Solovky, and was therefore under the Tcheka and not the judicial authorities. I soon ascertained the reason for his absence, which at the time struck me as peculiar.

At last my turn came, and I appeared before the commission. It was a very large one, consisting of doctors and representa-

tives of the Soviet judicial authorities. After endless questions and a prolonged examination, the president of the commission uttered the word *Dosrotchno* ("Before the term").

I left the room in a state of joyful excitement. All that now remained for me to do was to obtain a copy of the commission's certificate and send it to the Consulate. My release would then be almost a certainty, for even the Tcheka could not have the cynical impudence to refuse to liberate me after the Soviet medico-judicial commission itself had pronounced me a fit person to be released in accordance with Soviet law.

So I thought; but the result was quite the contrary of what I expected. Towards evening the head doctor came into my ward in a great state of agitation and said to me, raising his voice:

"What right had you to go before the commission? You are under administrative sentence, under the control of the Tcheka, not of the judicial authorities; you have no right to be medically inspected or to be released before your time is up. Do you want me to become an administrative prisoner too?"

The only reply I could make to the agitated and terrified doctor was:

"How should I know all your Soviet laws? You examined me yourself and sent me to the commission of inspection yourself. It seems to me that all the sick prisoners suffer and die just the same, whatever body they are under."

"Yes, yes, but you never told me that you had been sentenced by administrative order. I can do nothing for you. I have no right."

So I was outside even Soviet law! Now I understood why the half-paralysed priest had not been before the committee of inspection.

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One fine day, for reasons best known to the authorities, I was moved to another ward in the same corridor. There were seven of us in my new ward. There were three other "intellectuals" besides myself—Colonel Matveeff, a former police

commissary, a lecturer at the Polytechnic Institute named Dolgin, and one Koltsoff, commander of a Soviet frontier brigade. The other three inmates were a soldier of the Red Army, a student belonging to the *Komsomol*¹ (Communist League of Youth), and a habitual petty thief nicknamed "The Bodkin". We were a small but intimate party.

The Young Communist and The Bodkin were suffering from epilepsy in a most acute form, and had fits nearly every day. As the doors leading into the corridor were open, the noise of epileptics falling down and struggling in convulsions (which happened frequently) was audible in our room. When the Young Communist and The Bodkin heard the cries of the epileptics in the corridor, they fell down themselves and began to roll about in convulsions. At such moments the whole floor was simply a madhouse, for there were epileptics in nearly all the other wards, and they too were infected by their comrades' seizures.

The rest of us went to the aid of the epileptics, one pressing the man's shoulders against the floor while another held on to his legs. Then, when the epileptic had become quiet, he was carried to bed. Among them were not a few simulators, whose imitations reached a high degree of skill. They usually let their hair grow long, as anyone falling on the stone floor was liable to receive a severe blow on the head.

My new ward-mates' stories of their imprisonment were familiar enough to anyone acquainted with Soviet conditions.

Colonel Matveeff's case was still being investigated, i.e. he was a Tcheka prisoner. He was accused of having served in the police under the Tsarist régime. His case had been sent to Moscow. He was sixty-seven years old, and suffered from asthma and an ulcer in the stomach. He expected a death sentence,² but³ regarded the matter with complete indifference; his physical sufferings had been severe, and he was tired of life.

The lecturer Dolgin was a tall, handsome man. He had been sent⁴ to hospital from "reformatory No. 2", in which he had been sentenced by a court to spend three years. He had nearly

¹ *Kommunistichesky soiuz molodezhi*.

recovered from an attack of pleurisy, and would soon have to be sent back to prison. He was a typical representative of the mentality of a certain section of the Russian educated class who are known as "signal-changers"; they have an unshakable faith in the evolution of Bolshevism, and believe it to be an historical necessity, indispensable to the further progress of Russia on the road to recovery.

Dolgin had been prosecuted as the result of a denunciation by one of the students. According to Soviet law only persons of proletarian origin may receive university education. Only thus, in the opinion of the Soviet authorities, can a new *intelligentsia* be created, impregnated with the proletarian ideology, and in touch with the mass of workmen and peasants. No young men, therefore, who have the misfortune to be the sons of officials, merchants, noblemen, engineers, doctors, priests, officers, and so on, are admitted to the higher educational establishments. If, by any chance, one of these representatives of "elements dangerous to society" penetrates into a higher educational establishment, he is expelled when the annual "comb out" takes place and punished as severely as if he had committed some crime.

The lecturer Dolgin had had a brother—a colonel, who had been killed in the war in 1915. The colonel's son had been left an orphan, and Dolgin had taken charge of his nephew. The boy was very clever, and passed the entrance examination for the School of Mines with brilliant success. But he had not been long at the School before the periodical "comb out" was held, and the commission discovered that the student Dolgin was a colonel's son. The young man was expelled and kept in prison for three months. But the lad proved stubborn. He secured for himself forged papers in a fictitious name and got into the electro-mechanical section of the Petrograd Polytechnic, where his uncle was a lecturer. All went well; in order not to arouse suspicion, the nephew lived apart from his uncle and never even went to his house. But at a sports competition between the higher educational establishments of Petrograd one of the students of the School of Mines happened to recognize young

Dolgin and informed the Tcheka. An investigation was set on foot, and the upshot was that the lecturer Dolgin was placed in the dock for "complicity and failure to give information", and his nephew for forging papers. After a number of "mitigating circumstances" had been brought forward, each received three years' imprisonment.

When Dolgin told me this shocking story, I could not contain my anger. But my companion remarked with Olympian placidity:

"It can't be helped. If you cut timber, the splinters fly. And the Bolsheviks are right in their way. They want a proletarian *intelligentsia*, not connected with the old régime either by traditions or by inheritance. Things will straighten themselves out in time, and in a few years, when the new *intelligentsia* is running the country, better days will come. Then this hatred will disappear; it is the result of the revolutionary fanaticism of the people now in power, who have emerged from the revolutionary underworld."

How many times did I hear those words "in a few years", full of vague hope, from Russian intellectuals who had reconciled themselves to the Soviet régime!

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As an ex-officer, I was especially interested by the personalities of the two Soviet military men—the Red Army soldier and the Red general, commander of a rifle brigade. The soldier bore the literary name of Garshin, eloquent to a Russian ear, while the Red general, as I mentioned on a previous page, was called Koltsoff.

Garshin was short, thick-set, and fair, with a pale, bloated face overgrown with light fluff. He was twenty-two, but looked still younger. He suffered from torturing headaches and nervous attacks as the result of a sabre cut on the head received in the civil war. He had been sent to our hospital for examination from the Tcheka prison at Pskoff, to which he had been relegated as a deserter. In the intervals between his attacks he was a very loquacious, lively talker, with the coarse manners typical of

the Pskoff peasantry. He took cocaine vigorously, and was evidently flush of money, for he did not boggle at paying eight or ten roubles for the few grammes of cocaine with which some friends in the wards on another floor supplied him. He worried but little about his arrest, for, as he said, he had fought for the cause of the Revolution and had been twice rewarded with the order of the Red Flag. When only a lad of seventeen he had fought with the Red Army against the White troops in the Ukraine. After that he had taken part in numerous punitive expeditions sent to suppress peasant revolts and collect the tax in kind from the peasants. At the close of the period of militant Communism, Garshin returned to his home in the Pskoff Government, where his eldest brother was occupied in farming, and kept a shop in one of the villages. In 1923 he reached the age of twenty-one, and was therefore called up again for military service.

The system Garshin found prevailing in the army when he entered it for his second period of service was in sharp contrast to the comfortable life he had led in the Red cavalry during the civil wars and the period of militant Communism. Now it was drill, theoretical exercises, and political education from morning to night, and he had to obey his superiors. And in 1919, near Romny, he had cut his squadron commander down with a sabre by order of the squadron committee, because the commander, an old Tsarist officer, seemed to them unreliable.

"But why," I asked Garshin, "was it decided to kill the commander with the cold steel? Wouldn't it have been simpler to shoot him, seeing that it had been decided to kill him in one way or another?"

"Well, you see, I came forward as a volunteer, and the squadron handed him over to me to do as I liked with."

Garshin was dissatisfied with the existing system in the Red Army, and considered himself badly treated. Although he had twice been awarded the Red Flag, he was not promoted to be a platoon commander, and was removed from his duties as a section commander because he had not passed the prescribed examination in the field service regulations and political know-

ledge. Then he went on leave and decided not to return to the army, which did not set a proper value on his services in the Revolution. I do not know what happened to this "Red hero", for he was soon transferred from our hospital to the central military prison.

I became fairly intimate with the Red general Koltsoff. He was a very agreeable, gifted, and highly educated man. Notwithstanding the sharp divergence of our views on many questions, my recollections of him are very pleasant.

Koltsoff was a soldier to the backbone, and his torn, dirty dressing-gown could not disguise his old-style military bearing and the briskness of his movements. The Revolution had found Koltsoff a captain in an infantry regiment on the Russo-German front. His popularity with the soldiers saved his life in the first period of the revolutionary storm, and then, like many of the surviving officers, he adapted himself to the situation, and was a witness in turn of the dissolution of the army, the period of the civil wars, and finally the organization of the Red Army, in which he became commander of a rifle brigade stationed on the Russo-Polish frontier.

Koltsoff had just recovered from an attack of pneumonia, and was daily expecting to be tried before the Supreme Military Tribunal. He was charged with espionage on behalf of Poland, and was to be the central figure of the trial. The grounds for the accusation consisted in the disappearance of several secret orders and instructions from brigade headquarters and Koltsoff's friendly relations with certain former Tsarist officers on the Russo-Polish frontier. Although Koltsoff himself had reported the disappearance of the secret documents as soon as he discovered it, he was to be tried on a very serious charge, and he was sure that the tribunal would condemn him to death.

"You understand, Cederholm," he said, "that no Soviet judge will doubt for a moment that I am guilty, seeing that I am an old Tsarist officer. Though we have proved our loyalty to the Soviet power with our own blood dozens of times, they only tolerate us up to a point, for the time being. Sometimes they even give us medals and put us into comparatively high

posts; but the slightest breath of suspicion—and we are guilty every time. It will be still worse in the future, for as more and more new officers, Soviet-trained and of proletarian origin, enter the army we old officers become less and less indispensable.”

The Young Communist student, whose bed was next to Koltsoff's, thought this a favourable moment to join in our conversation.

“You think,” the student began, “that the Soviet power ought to trust you blindly. But why should it? You say you have sealed your loyalty with your blood. Of course I am not speaking of you personally; I am only taking you as an example. Good. Let us admit that you have fought for the interests of the proletariat and served it honourably. But none the less, it is impossible to trust you; for at the very best you did it under compulsion, because you are accustomed to obey orders, because soldiering is your trade, which keeps you alive, and the only thing most of you can do. I shall never believe that in the depths of your hearts you are devoted to the interests of the proletariat. For the present, so long as you're watched, so long as you're paid, and so long as you feel that the Soviet power is strong, you're all loyal; but if the wind changed in the slightest, and you saw a possibility of getting away, you'd all bolt and go over to the other camp. How can it be otherwise with you Tsarist officers, when even our own proletarian students have to be watched? So long as a man is at his bench, the interests of the workers are his concern and he takes an interest in party affairs, but when he's been put through a *Rabfak*¹ and given an education, he gets new interests and gradually loses touch with the working masses.”

“Then, in your opinion, it comes to this,” I asked the student, “that education and the interests of the proletariat are irreconcilable—that as soon as a workman or peasant becomes an engineer, a doctor, an officer, or a lawyer he loses touch with the proletarian masses and acquires the *bourgeois* ideology? That is what I understood you to mean.”

¹ *Rabotchy fakultet*, a course of education for working-men, of three or four years' duration.

The Young Communist, feeling that he had fallen into a trap, replied heatedly:

"I did not mean to say for a moment that the education of the proletariat is harmful to the interests of the Revolution. I only mean that your *bourgeois* leaven is still so strong that the weaker vessels among our comrades sometimes give way and acquire *bourgeois* habits, views, and tastes. Of course all this will disappear in time, as the capitalistic governments become proletarianized, but for the time being we have to keep a careful watch upon one another."

There was no interest or utility in continuing the discussion; it would, moreover, have been dangerous, for we were not in a position of equality; the student could say all that he thought with perfect freedom, but Koltsoff and I could not, seeing that everything we said might become known to the Tcheka.

CHAPTER XXX

A Red General on Red Officers—Soldiers' Rations—Old and New Soldiers Compared—The Army and the Government—Unlikelihood of War—Future in the Peasants' Hands—The General's Philosophy

KOLTSOFF AND I continued our conversation the same day, sitting together in a window seat in the corridor. Gazing reflectively at the distant spires of the Alexandro-Nevisky monastery, which we could see from the window, Koltsoff began: "You scored 100 per cent. of hits, as they say, with our Young Communist friend. It is true that education is irreconcilable with the proletarian ideology in the form in which it is understood and applied in this country at the present moment. I have had a great deal to do with the young, newly formed *Komsostav*,¹ for nearly 60 per cent. of the officers in my brigade were Soviet-trained.

"Although they are all without exception of proletarian origin and have all been crammed to the teeth with 'political knowledge' in the military schools, they all very quickly become assimilated with the old officers and acquire a great deal from us. All that remains of their Soviet schooling is a certain democratic outlook; they are utterly indifferent to political questions, and it has repeatedly happened that I, if you please, have had to remind them that attendance at clubs, public meetings, and lectures on political subjects is compulsory.

"You probably know that there is in each regiment a military commissary, a trusted party worker; the political control of all the officers and men in the regiment, and the organization of party work in the regiment, are in his hands. There is a club in each regiment for officers and men, where lectures are held, performances given, and chess played. There is a library, too. Of course it is all very simple, I might say primitive. There is

¹ *Komandnyi sostav*, commanding personnel: the designation given to the officers of the Red Army. Individual officers are called *komsostavtsy*, the word *ofitser*, with its old régime associations, being avoided.

no separate club for officers, and the latter prefer to spend their time off duty away from the regiment. The unmarried officers usually mess together in one of the rooms belonging to the regiment, and although in some regiments the commissaries look askance at such exclusiveness on the part of the 'commanding personnel', they can do nothing, for things would be considerably worse if they compelled the officers to mess with the men. Experience has shown that friction arises immediately when this is attempted, on account of the difference in the food, the number of dishes, the service, and so on; for the new Soviet officers' corps, despite the proletarian ideology with which it has been inoculated, acquires from some mysterious source a desire for good knives and forks, good cooking, and smart clothes.

"And, mark you, the soldiers' rations are more than sufficient, and quite as good as under the old régime. In many 'picked' regiments, especially in the Tcheka troops, the rations are even better than in the old army. But there is one thing to which the Russian soldier simply cannot accustom himself—and that is eating off separate plates. In spite of all the measures taken—the issuing of tin plates, knives, forks, and metal spoons—the attempts at Europeanization are having no success, and all these emblems of civilization lie peacefully on the shelves, to be looked at, and the Red soldiers prefer to eat together from common dixies with wooden spoons.

"But the carrying out of domestic duties in the barracks by Red soldiers of *bourgeois* origin causes no dissatisfaction; it is regarded as a matter of course. You know that by Soviet law persons of *bourgeois* origin and *bourgeois* professions are called up for service only in auxiliary units, and are not allowed to carry arms. They clean the barracks, cook food, lay and clear the tables, work in the regimental workshops, and discharge all kinds of similar duties.

"The mass of the soldiers? Well, for my part, when I compare the Red Army soldier of to-day with the pre-Revolution soldier, I see no great change in the direction of progress. I am not speaking of the picked units, of the Tcheka troops; but in

the 'ruck' of the army, in my opinion, no special progress can be noted which could be set to the credit of the Soviet régime. The soldier has perhaps become more cultivated, and discharges his duties more intelligently. But who knows what kind of soldiers we should have had now if there had been no war and no revolution? I joined the army in 1909, and so I know what great work had been begun in the cultural domain, what reforms in every branch of military life had been planned; but unhappily these were cut short by the war.

"So I can say only one thing: the Red soldier of to-day is no worse than the pre-Revolution soldier, but that is all. Great caution should be observed in forming a judgment of the Red soldiers' intellectual development, for they are crammed to overflowing with all kinds of brochures, lectures, and party newspapers, and the Red soldiers retain fragments of information of the most variegated kind without any solid foundation. In my opinion this superficial dilettantism is purely harmful, and cannot promote the spiritual development of young men taken straight from the plough.

"The outward appearance of the Red soldier is markedly inferior to that of the old pre-Revolution soldier. But it must be remembered in this connection that the style of uniform and the demands made on the soldier by present-day conditions of war account for a good deal. The officers have no difficulty in maintaining discipline, and the regimental commissaries co-operate with them to this end in every way. The whole of the soldiers' instruction apart from their actual military training is in the hands of the regimental commissary and the so-called Communist cells, formed of soldiers belonging to the party who have been through a special course. The latter do not interfere at all in the military life of the regiment; while carrying on political work and propaganda, they see at the same time that discipline is maintained when the men are not engaged in their military duties."

"You consider, then, that the Red Army is organized on a thoroughly sound basis, and is a reliable support for the Soviet power?" I asked Koltsoff.

"A reliable support against whom?"

Koltsoff gave me a malicious glance as he uttered these words. Then, resuming his former serious expression, he continued:

"At all times, and in all States, the army was, is, and will be loyal so long as the ruling power is strong. You ask me about the loyalty of the army to the Soviet power? For Heaven's sake don't hurry to answer; I have not finished yet, and you will see that I have no more illusions than you have regarding the strength of the Soviet Government and the likelihood of its remaining for long on a firm basis. There are malcontents in the army, as everywhere in Soviet Russia. These malcontents do not openly display their dissatisfaction any more than their civilian brethren; anyone who ventures to do so is immediately 'rendered harmless', or, to use the Tcheka expression, liquidated.

"Are there many malcontents in the army? Certainly the percentage is a good deal lower than that of the malcontents among the civilian population. In the first place, the whole army consists of young men, who do not remember the pre-Revolution Russia, and if any of them do remember Tsarist Russia, it is the disagreeable sides of life that they recollect—the disintegration of the army, the famine, the civil wars. It is not difficult to convince these young men that the *bourgeoisie* and no one else was entirely to blame for the civil wars and the famine. In the second place, most of the soldiers come from a peasant environment, and the peasants, although they grumble, are following their own line, getting their candidates into the local Soviets, and gradually building up the life of the countryside afresh under the Red Star. The peasants have adapted themselves to the existing régime, and they will not revolt, for they have already realized that sooner or later they will be 'top dog'. The malcontents in the army will not dare to lift their heads until they have at least some faint belief that their protest will be successful—in other words, some hope of escaping punishment. They might feel that they could act with impunity if disorder and anarchy were to break out in the country, as might happen if we were involved in a prolonged war with an enemy possessing ample resources and strong nerves.

"And now let me ask you a question. Who the devil wants to make war on us, at any rate in the immediate future? The war would have to be a long one to bring about a *coup d'état* in Russia. Poor as we are, we have at the present moment, in peacetime, over a million bayonets and a fair amount of material. And we have proved already, in the militant Communism period and the civil wars, that we can do without a lot of things without which your soldiers won't fight. Come, tell me, please, what country in Europe wants to fight us, and why? Are you so well off yourselves that any of you would think of starting a war? And we will never start a war ourselves, for we will never put such a trump card into your hands. Oh, all this talk of war! it makes me sick to have to listen to it.

"And why should you make war on us? What would you get from us, even if there were a *coup d'état*? Do you think that if there were a *coup d'état* things would arrange themselves at once, and that your money would be paid over? I am sure your politicians have realized long ago that it will be much more advantageous for you, and much safer from the international point of view, to starve us out. I am speaking figuratively, of course, but you understand that sooner or later the Komintern will retreat from its present position, for the Komintern is dependent on the Soviets and our bayonets. I have told you already that there are malcontents both in the country as a whole and in the army. The people in power know it, and understand that the terror can be a successful weapon only against the *intelligentsia*, and that to pacify the peasants other measures than the terror are required. Therefore, as you yourself can see, concession after concession is being made to the peasants, and as time goes on it will become more and more so.

"In the course of time the Soviets will completely change their aspect and their ideology; for the future, and Russia, belong to the peasants, and Marx and Lenin cannot change the Russian peasant. I have probably not more than a fortnight to live, for my trial may be held any day, and then I shall be sentenced to death. A few days will probably be allowed for

the revision of the sentence and a petition for clemency, but all that will be for form's sake only; I know I shall be shot.

"I often think now what a happy man I should have been if I had quietly gone abroad at the very beginning of the Revolution, as many people did. Poverty, the deprivations of an *émigré's* life, a precarious existence—what is all that compared with what I have undergone and what awaits me? But believe me when I tell you, standing on the edge of my grave, that the bitterest thought of all to me is that I shall not see, even as an old man, the real, true, national Russia, which is being born now in suffering and torment, and in which I firmly believe.

"You have asked me, very tactfully, whether I have any feeling of resentment against the men in power who are sending me to my death. I have asked myself the same question thousands of times; I have, so to speak, ransacked the secret places of my heart; and I can tell you with a clear conscience, no, I feel no resentment. Neither they nor I are to blame for the fact that we have met on the boundary line between two epochs. In twenty years, or perhaps a little longer, Russia will have recovered, and then all the horrors we are now experiencing will seem no more than a nightmare of the remote past.

"In a moment we shall go back to the ward, where we cannot speak freely, because we suspect that each of our comrades may be an agent of the Tcheka. And yet we are safer from secret agents and *provocateurs* here in the prison hospital than we should be outside. There is not one organization, one firm, one house, in which the Tcheka has not its secret agent, and any citizen may at any moment fall a victim to an *agent provocateur* or an informer. But these conditions will disappear as more stable elements get into the Soviets, who will think first and foremost of reconstructing Russia on a firm basis, and not of securing momentary breathing-spaces in the interests of the world revolution. Give the peasants time to grow strong, and above all to educate themselves, and they will get the Tcheka into their hands; they have already achieved much that no one would have dreamt of when Communism began."

The arrival of our "educator", and the order "to the talk", interrupted our conversation.

CHAPTER XXXI

The Last of General Koltsoff—Our Hospital Library—"The Elephant's" Book List—I am Evacuated—Duties of Escort Troops—English Loan Fiasco—Back to the Tcheka Prison

IN THE SECOND HALF of November I received the news that the Soviet Government was demanding fifteen Communists imprisoned in Finland in exchange for me. A large number of these Communists, who had been concerned in the Red rebellion in Finland in 1918, were Finnish citizens. My liberation, therefore, depended on the willingness of these imprisoned Finnish Communists to become Soviet citizens. If they were not willing, it would be impossible, under Finnish law, to send them by force to Soviet Russia. The hope of being released in one way or another once more dawned on my horizon and lightened the burden of captivity.

Koltsoff was removed to the central military prison two days before his trial. I learned from the Soviet papers that he had been sentenced to death and the sentence upheld on appeal. I presume that his petition for clemency was also rejected.

In our prison hospital, as in all Soviet prisons, there was a library, managed by two members of the "Communist cell" of the hospital. Every organization and business undertaking in Soviet Russia is bound to contain a Communist cell. The most prominent and reliable Communists among the employees of the organization in question form the cell. The number of members of the cells varies; it depends on the number of the personnel, but it should in no case be less than three. The nomination of members is under the control of the district committee of the party, and if the committee of any organization or firm is unable to allot reliable party workers to the cell because the staff is too small, the district committee dismisses non-party employees and completes the staff of the organization with reliable Communists.

The Communist element in our hospital did not contain reliable, experienced Communists to form the "cell". The

district committee, therefore, dismissed the hospital apothecary, a non-party Jew burdened with a large family, and appointed in his place another Jew who was a Communist. The new apothecary was appointed president of the Communist cell. As the conduct of propaganda and educational work is among the duties of the cell, the new apothecary directly supervised the hospital library.

Each prisoner was entitled to take three books out of the library weekly. The library was large and admirably stocked, especially the foreign section. There was nothing astonishing in this, as the library had come down to the Bolsheviks as a legacy from the times when the Haas hospital was still a place of detention for the "privileged classes", and after that an officers' hospital. The contents of the library, as was only to be expected, had been severely damaged during the revolutionary years, but in exchange for a number of books in the old catalogue which had disappeared a quantity of new books, mainly of a strictly party character, had made their appearance.

Every time I wrote down the names of the three books to which I was entitled in the notebook provided for the purpose I got either none of the books I had mentioned at all or only one of them, and those given me instead were always Communist literature. I thought at first that this was accidental, or that the books I had asked for were not in the library. It proved, however, that this was not the case at all. The sole reason was that the apothecary, Comrade Zwieback, had resolved to undertake my Communistic education. Not wishing to make my position, already bad enough, still more difficult, I allowed Comrade Zwieback to supply me with such books as were to his taste, and had no difficulty in persuading my friends The Elephant and The Bodkin to take out books chosen by me, both of them being totally indifferent to literature. Thus I had a sufficiency of interesting books to read, The Elephant and The Bodkin received tobacco and sugar from me, and Comrade Zwieback had the pleasure of believing that he was guiding my steps in the paths of truth.

I was very nearly caught one day through my terrible absent-

mindedness. Something impelled me to enter a volume of Kipling, in English, in The Elephant's notebook. Comrade Zwieback was desirous of becoming personally acquainted with the English-speaking prisoner, and went to The Elephant's ward. I do not remember what story the poor Elephant concocted for Comrade Zwieback's benefit, but, as I have said before, he was an honourable rascal, and he did not betray me. I do not suppose, however, that his explanations satisfied our librarian, for one look at The Elephant was enough to arouse scepticism as to his literary proclivities.

Late one Monday evening at the beginning of December I was told by a Sister who was amiably disposed towards me that preparations were being made for my evacuation from the hospital on Tuesday, secret instructions to this effect having been received from the Tcheke. On hearing this I immediately took steps to inform the Consulate privately of my removal. I did not know, of course, where they were going to send me, but the Consulate ought to be told of it. Besides sending a note privately, I had another chance of conveying news of myself to my friends, as a parcel for me was to be brought to the hospital on Tuesday. Without arousing the suspicions of the administration, I authorized one of my friends to receive the parcel. I reckoned that the Consulate, on receiving a receipt for the parcel signed with a name unknown to it, would at once suspect that something had happened to me, and would endeavour to trace me.

On Tuesday morning the senior warder on duty came into my ward and ordered me to get ready. In the room where the prisoners' own things, handed over for safe custody, are kept an unimaginable state of filth prevails, and vermin of various kinds crawl about the floor. All the things and the prisoners' rags are flung down in one heap, whence the official in charge of the store-room extracts them amid clouds of dust. Searching for my things and changing my clothes exhausted me very much, so I declared emphatically that I would under no circumstances go on foot. I was allowed to hire a cab at my own expense. At last everything was ready, the cab was called, I got

in with two guards, and we set off. The senior guard told the driver to go to the Shpalernaja. I was, then, returning to the direct supervision of the Tcheka.

It was a clear, sunny day, with a slight frost, and after the foul hospital air, the floods of light and the cheerful brightness had an intoxicating effect on me. One of my guards sat by my side, the other opposite me on the front seat. Before removing me from the hospital they had put up the safety-catches of their rifles and searched my pockets. This is done to make it impossible for a prisoner to fling tobacco in his escort's eyes, in order to blind them for the moment and make his escape.

The cab was in a deplorable state, and we crawled along at the slowest possible pace, to my great satisfaction. My escort proved to be talkative lads. They were both very neatly and cleanly dressed. The senior of the two had special marks on his overcoat collar, indicating that he was a lance-corporal, nowadays called a section commander. Both were of peasant origin, came from the central provinces, and had completed their second year's service in one of the four escorting regiments stationed in Petrograd. What the senior guard told me, when I questioned him about his duties, may give an idea of the number of persons under arrest in the prisons in and round Petrograd and the number of prisoners sent from that city with the various transports.

"Two escorting regiments are on duty every day," he said. "Every man in the regiment is on his legs all day; you never have a chance of getting into barracks to tidy yourself up. I only came back from a long-distance transport with my platoon yesterday—from Vologda. To-day we're handing you over, and then we go to the Kresty to escort some prisoners to the station. The day after to-morrow I shall be on some other job of the kind, and then I shall be off with another long-distance transport."

This means that *in Petrograd alone* 4,000 soldiers are employed *daily* on outdoor guard duty at the prisons and in escorting prisoners being transferred elsewhere or moved about for other reasons. The reader can draw his own conclusions.

When we were crossing the Nevsky Prospect, the cab stopped, as a great procession with banners and placards was passing. I gathered from the inscriptions on the placards that the demonstration was a protest against the English loan. I knew already from the Soviet papers that the negotiations for a loan of £3,000,000 in England had not been crowned with success. The whole newspaper campaign in favour of the loan had been conducted in an astonishingly crude manner, as the object in view was to influence working-class and peasant opinion, and the opinion of the *intelligentsia* was not taken into consideration at all. At first the whole Press—in accordance, it need hardly be said, with instructions from above—tried to prove that the Soviet Government had cunningly outwitted the English in persuading them to lend £3,000,000 at 10 per cent. interest. But the newspaper campaign was unable to persuade even the uneducated working masses of Russia that a loan on these terms would be advantageous. Speeches against the loan were delivered at meetings in many of the Petrograd factories. These speeches, even as reproduced in the Soviet papers in an abbreviated and bowdlerized form, showed that the people fully realized how dangerous and disadvantageous such a loan would be. Then the “heavy artillery” was brought up; the leaders—Kameneff, Bukharin, Stalin, Rykoff, and Kalinin—began to make a tour of the factories. To judge from the newspapers, the efforts of the orators from the Kremlin had turned the opinion of the masses in favour of the loan.

But an unexpected *contretemps* suddenly occurred; the malignant English reconsidered the matter and refused to grant the loan. The Soviet Government and the Press were obliged to open a campaign in the opposite sense; they now shrieked at the top of their voices about the inordinate demands of the English and their desire to enslave the proletariat by means of extortionate interest charges—that same 10 per cent. which only a month earlier had been held up to the working masses as a master-stroke of Soviet diplomacy.

Fate had decreed that I, an “international spy”, should be an

involuntary witness of the whole of this protest comedy while being transferred from one prison to another.

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We slowly crossed the Znamenskaja Street and turned to the left into the Shpalernaja. One could tell that one was in the neighbourhood of a prison; parties of prisoners under escort met us, and several motor-cars dashed past carrying young men in green caps—examining judges and plenipotentiaries of the Tcheka. At last we drove up. I paid the cabman, who did not fail to say “A pleasant journey, your Excellency”, took my things out of the cab with the help of my escort, and we approached the gates which should have borne the inscription “Abandon hope for ever”. For the vast majority of those who had entered those gates there had been no hope of ever returning.

We entered.

CHAPTER XXXII

A Party of Exiles—"Red Tape" Formalities—Common Room No. 13—Our "Mayor" and "Housekeeper"—Life in a Common Room—The Lett Karlusha—Grave News from the Consulate

I ENTERED THE PRISON an experienced and hardened "criminal".

We went in at the gates, crossed the small front yard and entered the main building by the principal door. We had to go upstairs, and one of the guards, seeing that I had difficulty in carrying my suit-case and the bundle of bedding, took them both from me with the words, "A man can't keep very fit on prison grub".

My escort showed a pass at a barred door on the second floor, and the sentry admitted us. We entered a fairly long, broad passage, on both sides of which were several doors with different inscriptions. I was struck by one of them in particular: "Prison Governor's Office". I had been examined in that office several times. The senior guard left me with his comrade and entered one of the nearest rooms, on the door of which was printed "Reception of Prisoners".

My guard and I sat down on a seat which ran along the wall, and I smoked a cigarette. Not far from us stood a large group of young men in students' caps and young girls, surrounded by armed soldiers. Both students and girls behaved without any constraint; they carried on a loud conversation among themselves and with another rather smaller but more heterogeneous group which stood opposite them. This small group consisted of several students, two priests, two elderly ladies, and an old gentleman who looked like an ex-officer. I gathered from fragments of talk which reached me that both groups were to be transported—to the Urals and to North-Eastern Siberia.

My guard, who sat by me with his rifle between his knees, yawned lazily from time to time and gazed with truly bucolic indifference at the excited, loquacious young men and women

and the guards who surrounded both groups of exiles, and whose faces expressed nothing but heavy boredom.

"What are they making all that fuss about?" my guard asked lazily, nodding his head in the direction of the students. "They'll have calmed down all right by the time they get to Ekaterinburg. It's no joke being shaken about for a fortnight in a prisoners' truck. We guards are better off than they are, and we're perfect wrecks for a couple of days after the transport has arrived."

I was about to ask my companion a question, when the corridor warden on duty came up to us and took us into the prisoners' reception-room.

After the dirty, neglected prison hospital, I was at once struck by the cleanliness and order prevailing here, in the Tcheka prison. One could see that repairs had been carried out not long before, for the walls were bright with new paint, and splashes of lime were visible in many places on the floor. I mentioned in a previous chapter that these repairs had been carried out with the money taken from the former banker Goldman, who died in the Haas hospital.

I was asked to sit down on a wooden bench which ran along one wall of the reception-room. The room was divided into two unequal parts by a barrier. In the part where I sat there was no furniture at all but two benches, while the office proper, on the other side of the barrier, was most comfortably equipped with American office furniture. Two neatly dressed girls sat before typewriters, while the official on reception duty sat at a writing-table making entries in a book. He was in the Tcheka uniform, with cap, sabre, and revolver.

An old priest stood opposite him, and on the floor lay an open suit-case full of things, which a young man, very brisk in his movements, was examining in detail. He also wore the Tcheka uniform. When the priest and his belongings were taken away, the man seated at the table called after him:

"If the window of 23 is shut, take him to 15."

I felt sorry for the poor priest, for I knew that numbers 23 and 15 formed part of the "special floor" and were in the basement.

"Citizen Ce-ce-ce-derho-Cederholm," the man at the table cried, stumbling, as all Russians do, over the pronunciation of my name.

I went through the barrier and handed my belongings over to the brisk young man for examination. I was given three forms to fill up. One of the girls turned to me and said, rather coquettishly:

"Please write legibly, citizen; we're ruining our sight on your account."

The forms contained the invariable questions—year of birth, name, why arrested, profession, whether sentenced, and so on. The Tcheka has all this information regarding each prisoner many times over; at any rate, it was in possession of the fullest details concerning me; but "red tape" prevails all through the Soviet administration. I could not, however, deny myself the pleasure of "pulling their legs" a bit, so I put a dash opposite the question "Why arrested?" When the official looked through the forms, I noticed that he frowned involuntarily.

"Why have you not answered all the questions on the form?" he asked.

"Because I really do not know why I was arrested and why I am being kept in prison."

The official searched among the contents of a large envelope which lay before him on the table. My escort had brought it from the Haas hospital along with me. He took a sheet of paper from it and said in a precise, matter-of-fact manner:

"You were originally sentenced, citizen, to five years' imprisonment in a concentration camp. This sentence was subsequently altered to three years' imprisonment in the said camp. You are accused of dealings in contraband, military and economic espionage, organizing counter-revolutionary bands, and discrediting the Soviet power. Were you really ignorant of all this?"

While this speech was being delivered the two girls looked at me with curiosity and alarm.

I had no alternative but to reply:

"I know all that, but it is all sheer nonsense, the ravings of a

madman, and I will not write a word of it on the form. As you know it all, write it yourself."

When my things had been examined and I myself entered in all the books, the official curtly ordered a warder to take me to No. 13, and gave him a slip of paper. I was most disagreeably surprised to hear the word "13". Apart from any prejudice against this number, I knew that all the cells with low numbers belonged to the "special floor", and I could only conclude that my case was being re-examined or that my sentence had again been changed, this time for a more severe one.

Quite contrary to my expectations, however, the warder who accompanied me did not turn in the direction of the "special floor", i.e. to the right and downstairs; he turned the opposite way, towards the third floor. It appeared that he had been ordered to place me in "common room" No. 13. I had not known that the numbering of the common rooms was quite separate from that of the single cells.

There were barred doors on both sides of a long, wide passage; through them I could see people, dressed in different ways, walking about large, gloomy, vaulted rooms, or standing in groups by the doors with their faces pressed close against the bars. The whole picture recalled a menagerie.

The senior corridor warder, the so-called "section director", took me over and gave a receipt for me. He then opened the door of one of the rooms right opposite the staircase we had just ascended and ushered me into my new dwelling. One of the men standing by the door looked at me curiously. My first impression, owing to the darkness which prevailed in the room, was that the place was very dirty and that all the unshaven, untidily dressed people were of the most criminal appearance. My eyes, however, gradually became accustomed to the scanty illumination of the room.

As I was taking my overcoat off several men came up to me, and one of them said:

"Allow me to introduce myself. I am Captain Bittner, local mayor or *starosta*. I will make a note of your name in a moment, but I am sorry to say I can't offer you a bed at once; the whole

place is overcrowded. You will have to sleep on the floor for a few nights."

A young man, very brisk in his movements, good-looking and well-built, interrupted the *starosta*. His name was Nosalevitch, and he had been a subaltern in the Guards.

"The season is at its height now, you know, and there's a vast influx of tourists," he said, smiling, with a nasal twang.

"Don't play the fool, Nosalevitch. Give the man a chance to look round. Keep moving, please, gentlemen; we're crowded enough as we are," the *starosta* urged, as he made the throng stand back. He added, addressing me in a most friendly manner and indicating a rather stout man with long hair brushed back flat on his head and a little beard:

"That's Karlusha, our housekeeper. He'll show you round and settle you in."

Karlusha took my things and invited me with a gesture to follow him. Depositing my belongings close to his bed, he initiated me into the traditions and rules of the prison. The "common rooms" are calculated to hold from twenty-five to forty persons. The beds are arranged along the walls; they are wooden frames with sail-cloth stretched over them, fastened to the wall by thongs at the narrow end. All the beds are turned up in the daytime; after the evening inspection at nine o'clock they are let down, and one of the stools on which the prisoners sit by day is placed under the free end of each. There is an interval of a foot between the beds. Those who have no beds receive sacks filled with straw in the evening and sleep on these sacks on the floor. In each common room there is a copper wash-stand with running water, and a closet separated from the room by an iron partition about five feet high.

The asphalt floor is swept three times a day by prisoners whom the *starosta* appoints in turn. Twice a week the floor is washed by different prisoners in rotation. All the domestic arrangements of the room are in the hands of the *starosta*, who is elected by the prisoners. The inmates of our room were at the moment all *bourgeois*, and I should therefore have to wait

my turn to secure a free bed. If there had been a prisoner belonging to the criminal element, or to the lower classes in general, it would have been possible to buy the right to a bed from him for five or six roubles. There were three fairly high barred windows in the room, and we were allowed to open the middle window in the evening to ventilate the room. The sun shone into the room for a few minutes only, as the windows opened on to a rather narrow yard, and the women's section of the prison, five storeys high, rose into the sky on the opposite side.

The small courtyard under our windows was the one I had passed through when I was brought from the hospital. By standing on the seat in the closet and pressing one's body close against the glass, a view could be obtained of everything that took place in the courtyard.

Two barred doors led from the room into the passage, at each end of the wall next to the passage. One of the doors was opened by the warder on duty, as required; the other was always kept shut. Formerly, before the Revolution, this door had been used for supplying the room with food sent up in a lift. One could guess that such an apparatus had existed from a large hole in the passage floor, just outside the door, covered by a sheet of iron. There was an orifice in this sheet of iron through which the cable of the lift had probably passed. By lying on one's stomach with one's face pressed close against the barred door, one could see everything that took place on the second floor in the neighbourhood of the office. We could also see from our room everyone who passed up or downstairs, and all day and all night we could hear the rattling of keys and the opening of doors.

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My informant, Karlusha, was a Lett by nationality, but the Revolution found him in Petrograd, where he had a warehouse full of agricultural machinery. Karlusha had endured hunger, cold, and all the horrors of the militant Communism epoch, but nevertheless had not departed to Latvia; he was prevented

from doing so by his attachment to a Russian woman, whom he had been unable to take abroad with him, although he had repeatedly endeavoured to do so. The Soviet authorities absolutely refused to give her a passport or to allow her to leave the territory of the U.S.S.R. At last, in 1924, Karlusha had contrived to save a small sum of money and had also been able to receive money from his relations in Latvia through the Latvian Consulate. It was now possible for him to send the woman he loved and her child over the Latvian frontier by utilizing the services of "specialists" engaged in conveying refugees across the frontier by stealth.

When this had been done, it only remained for Karlusha to leave the country himself; he was a Latvian subject, and it did not seem likely that there could be any obstacle to his departure. While he was endeavouring to obtain permission, Tcheke agents raided his flat and found in his possession a letter from Riga, written by the woman for whose sake he had endured so much. After endless interrogations and sufferings in prison, Karlusha admitted that he had received the letter through the Latvian Consulate. Of all the rest—that is, the woman's flight from Russia—there was no need to say anything, for the Tcheke knew of it already.

When I made his acquaintance he had been in prison five months, charged with espionage. His "case" was, of course, being tried administratively, and the examining judge had said that all the evidence had been sent to Moscow. The most terrible circumstance in his "case" was that the husband of his mistress (who had refused to divorce her) was a Tchekest, and the unhappy Karlusha was very nervous, for he expected to receive the maximum sentence from Moscow. He was an uncommonly obliging and courteous fellow, a general favourite in the room.

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A short time before the evening inspection, at about eight o'clock, I was called out into the corridor. One of the girls known in prison slang as "tugs" was waiting for me there. It

is their duty to take prisoners to examination, to the prison governor, to the office—in general, to escort prisoners inside the prison.

The “tug” took me downstairs. On my timidly asking where she was taking me, the smartly turned-out girl replied very sharply:

“Be quiet, citizen; talking’s not allowed. You’ll see when you get there.”

We arrived at the prisoners’ reception-room, and there, to my joy, I saw Mrs. Tch., from our Consulate. The senior warder was sitting at his table, a silent witness of our interview. I gathered from Mrs. Tch.’s reserved and fragmentary remarks that, on taking my parcel to the hospital and being handed a receipt signed with a strange name, she had guessed at once that I had been removed to some other place and the Consulate had at once taken steps to trace me.

It appeared that I was still in the position of a convict awaiting transportation to the Solovky, and as the transports for that place left on Wednesdays, it was intended to send me on the following day. The Consulate had therefore obtained permission from the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs to send one of its employees to have an interview of half an hour with me and take me a parcel of things which I should urgently require for the journey. As communication with the Solovky was already interrupted by the ice, I should have to be sent to Kem, on the mainland.

This news was a great blow to me, but I gathered from Mrs. Tch.’s guarded hints that there was some hope of the order being cancelled, for the Consulate courier had already left for Moscow, and the Finnish Minister was doing all that he could to get me kept in Petrograd.

I returned to my room completely crushed, and replied to my comrades’ sympathetic questions with the one significant word, “Solovky!”

After the evening inspection I received a mattress filled with straw, spread it on the floor, and hastened to lie down in order to escape the questions, consolations, and advice of kind-hearted

comrades, which only agitated me and prevented me from pulling myself together.

Rack my brains as I might, I could think of no means of relieving my situation; I could only rely on the energy and skill of our Minister and on Fate.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Prison "Workmen"—A Mask of Gaiety—Execution Day—Ghastly Scenes—An ex-Premier as Room-mate—The "Lyceum Trial"—Shooting of Prince Golitsin—Karlusha Commits Suicide—My Collapse

THE PRISON DAY began at seven in the morning with the distribution of bread rations, which were brought to every room by so-called "workmen". These, as I mentioned in an earlier chapter, were prisoners who had volunteered for domestic work in the prison. The "workmen" in our passage were lodged all together in one special room, the door of which was always open during the day. The "workmen" carried round bread to the rooms and brought the dixies containing dinner and supper from the kitchen; these were served out in the corridor, the prisoners being let out of their rooms in turn to receive food. As soon as the bread had been served out, the beds were put up, the mattresses collected from the floor, and the rooms swept and aired. Then the prisoner whose turn it was brought in a large teapot of boiling water. Neither tea nor sugar was provided by the prison; the prisoners had to buy both with their own money from the prison shop. In the middle of the room stood two large, rough, unpainted tables, with stools to match; at these tables we drank tea, had dinner and supper, and read the papers we bought and the books issued to us from the prison library.

Like the prison building itself, the library was a legacy to the Soviet power from the Tsarist epoch. The prison was built in the reign of Alexander III, in the nineties of the last century. The story is told that, when the prison was completed, Alexander III inspected it personally, and, going into one of the single cells, ordered that he should be shut into it. This was done, and the Emperor spent some ten minutes in the cell. History does not relate whether Alexander III was satisfied with the new prison.

By a cruel caprice of Fate the architect who built this prison,

when spending his old age peaceably in Petrograd, was thrown into this very prison in 1922 and died in one of the single cells.

All the stories, anecdotes, and jokes which I heard from my talkative companions made me feel at first that we had all assembled there quite casually, and for a short time, to pass the time pleasantly in intimate conversation. But this was only at a superficial glance. All this ceaseless, trivial chatter was only a mask for the nervous uneasiness of all these unfortunate men, afraid to think of the lamentable reality even for a moment. I personally was exasperated by all the noise and empty talk. From moment to moment I expected to hear a shout from the door: "Citizen Cederholm, with things!" More terrible than the actual fact of being suddenly sent to the Solovky was the realization that even now, after I had been condemned without trial, after all my sufferings of the past six months, the Finnish Government was powerless to protect me. It was detestable and humiliating to feel that I was completely and absolutely in the power of the Tcheka, and that that power knew no bounds.

At about seven o'clock in the evening an engineer and a very miserable-looking priest were summoned with their belongings to join the transport to the Solovetsky Islands. My heart stood still as I waited to hear my name called too. Late in the evening I regained my tranquillity; my friends had evidently protected me.

The days passed with their usual monotony, and I soon got to know not only my own room-mates, but the prisoners in the neighbouring rooms in our passage. We were let out every day for exercise in the courtyard and walked, five rooms at a time, in the circular space bounded by a high palisade which I described in a previous chapter. All kinds of men were there. Every intellectual profession was certainly represented, but the bulk of the prisoners were ex-officers, lawyers, priests, officials, and engineers. Sometimes business men made their appearance, but they were guests for a short time only, for when their cases had been investigated they were usually transferred to other prisons to await judgment. Prisoners were as a rule not kept long

in the common rooms section of our prison, as only those in whose cases the investigation was nearly finished were imprisoned in the common rooms. There were four exits from the common rooms—to death, to the Solovky, to Siberia, and to freedom.

The death sentences arrived from Moscow on Thursdays. At about eleven o'clock at night people began to move about in the passage; doors were slammed, the steps of a strong body of warders were audible, and the persons condemned to death were called out into the passage one by one. Sometimes, but very rarely, the death sentence was announced in the passage; as a rule, all the persons to be executed were taken down to the office, where the sentence was announced; they were then fettered, loaded on to a big lorry, and taken away to be shot either at the Polygon or in the Gorokhovaja prison, where they were shot in the concrete room. The lorry in which they were placed, or rather packed, always stopped under the windows of our room, and we could see the unhappy victims being packed into the lorry with chains about their legs and boards placed on top.

There were Thursdays on which as many as four lorries stopped under our window, and sometimes they came back again to fetch another party of condemned persons.

I remember only one Thursday on which not one person was taken from our prison for execution, and we could not understand what had happened. This was so unusual that at exercise time next day a silly rumour began to circulate among the prisoners that henceforward the death penalty was to be inflicted only on persons sentenced to death by a court. A week later our optimists had to admit that they had been too credulous, for more death sentences than ever arrived from Moscow, and on three Thursdays in succession from 150 to 200 persons were taken away to execution from the prison yard. On one of these Thursdays one of our corridor warders went out of his mind and began firing his revolver at Lenin's portrait which hung in the passage.

Thursday was a truly terrible day in the common rooms.

Many of the prisoners behaved all day as though half-demented, for almost every man might be sentenced to death. As eleven at night approached, one prisoner after another might be seen to rise from his bed and creep to the window, in order to stand on the seat of the closet, unnoticed by the corridor warder, and peep out to see if the motor-lorry had arrived. It was not really necessary to look out of the window, for we could always hear the lorry drive up.

When the noise in the passage had died away, and all the condemned persons had been taken downstairs, we could creep to the barred supply door which was always kept shut and, by lying on our stomachs and pressing our faces to the bars, look down the lift shaft and see what was happening in the passage on the second floor, outside the office.

I peeped down the shaft myself once. I have seen and experienced a good deal in the course of my life. I need only say that I have been through sailors' mutinies in two ships and took part in two punitive expeditions at the time of the disorders in Russia in 1905. I have strong nerves. But what I saw and heard through the hole of the lift shaft made my blood run cold with horror. Tchekists were forcing open the jaws of fettered men and thrusting india-rubber balls the size of oranges into their mouths, so that a blackish lump of india-rubber projected from each victim's mouth. Those white-faced, chained men with their open mouths and projecting gags were a ghastly sight.

The approach of a warder made me withdraw hurriedly from the door into the recesses of the room, but the heart-rending cries of the wretched victims whose mouths the Tchekists had not yet stopped with their patent corks I cannot to this day recall without a shudder.

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The personnel of our room and the other rooms was slowly but constantly changing. Instead of those shot or transported to remote places, fresh people arrived, either newly arrested or moved from single cells. I had already become an old inhabi-

tant of the room and, so to speak, the guardian of its traditions, for I was the only person in the whole prison who had already been sentenced.

Notwithstanding this, my position was uncertain in the extreme, for my sentence of transportation to the Solovky had never been officially cancelled, and I could not even get a reply from the prison administration, which I had asked to let me know under what authority I was. Afterwards, when I had been released, I found out that just at that time I was the subject of vigorous negotiations between the Finnish Government and the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, and the latter authority was endeavouring to persuade the Tcheka to allow me to be transferred to its own purview.

Every week I received a parcel and had an interview of half an hour's duration with one of the staff of our Consulate. I was told nothing about the course of the negotiations that was definite or consoling, for my conversations with my fellow-countrymen were always most strictly controlled. We were separated by two rows of thick bars a yard apart; a Tchekist stood by me on one side of the barrier, and another undesired listener on the other side close to my friend. Nevertheless, these conversations with my compatriots gave me much pleasure; they told me what my family were doing, and I had no longer any fear of my wife being enticed into a Soviet trap.

One evening in January 1925 an old man dressed in a sheep-skin coat, fur cap, and felt boots—the usual costume of the Russian peasant—was brought into our room. Despite his modest exterior there was something in the old man's face that irresistibly compelled attention. When he gave his name to the *starosta* to be entered on the roll, I at once remembered the old gentleman. He was Prince Nicholas Dmitrievitch Golitsin, the last Russian Premier of the Tsarist epoch. One of his sons had been a comrade of my own when a naval cadet and had served with me in the Imperial Fleet. Thanks to my authority as an old inhabitant of the prison, I had no difficulty in persuading a young student to sleep on the floor and obtaining a bed for the prince, who was both old and in bad health. The prince recog-

nized me when I told him my name, and was most indignant and astonished on hearing of my misfortunes.

He himself had suffered much since the Revolution, but his very great age—he was eighty-four—and his irreproachable conduct, even from the Bolshevik point of view, had saved him from the horrors of militant Communism. The old prince had lived in the greatest poverty with a son of forty-five in a garret in one of the half-ruined houses in Moscow, and worked as a cobbler, while his son undertook such unskilled labour as he could find. When the state of the house in which they lived began to cause anxiety, it was pulled down, and father and son moved to the town of Rybinsk. There they settled outside the town, in the cottage of an old woman, a peasant's widow. The prince looked after the public vegetable gardens, while his son went to the river to load and unload timber barges.

But even this miserable existence was destroyed. One day Tchekists appeared and arrested father and son. After endless journeys and sojourns in several prisons they at last reached the Butyrka prison in Moscow, whence they were transferred to our prison in Petrograd. The prince was lodged in our room, the son in one of the common rooms on the fourth floor. They were both accused of participation in a counter-revolutionary plot—the “plot” which had led to the so-called “Lyceum trial”. There was no trial properly speaking, for all the 210 persons involved in the case were tried administratively—that is, by the Central College of the Tcheka in Moscow.

The origin of the case was as follows. Some former pupils of the Imperial Alexander Lyceum held a private meeting in order officially to liquidate the non-existent funds of the Lyceum, these having lost all significance and *raison d'être*. The meeting chanced to be held on the anniversary of the death of Nicholas II, and the old pupils of the Lyceum taking part in it decided to offer prayers for the soul of the murdered sovereign—a most foolish and incautious proceeding in Soviet Russia, though fully comprehensible. This service was made a pretext for the arrest not only of all former pupils of the Lyceum without exception,

but also of their relations, friends, and ordinary acquaintances—210 persons in all. The Tcheka concocted a Monarchist plot on the basis of this incident.

Three participators in this "plot" were in our room besides Golitsin, and the total ages of the four "conspirators" amounted to 322. Prince Golitsin at least had preserved his entire faculties and his memory, but his two comrades, General Schilder and a former landowner named Tour, were in a state of complete senile decay.

Prince Golitsin had a paralytic stroke in February, and when he was taken to execution one Thursday had to be supported under the arms. He crossed himself as he went out, though hardly able to move his hand, and said: "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace. I am weary of life. Praise God!" General Schilder had died a week before Golitsin's execution, and Tour was sent to the Solovky for ten years; he died, however, on the way from an obstruction of the bladder, after terrible suffering. The story of his death was told me by one of a number of students who had travelled with him, with whom I happened to come into contact at the Solovky.

The execution of the old pupils of the Lyceum took place at a time when two other big "trials" concocted by the Tcheka were proceeding—that of a number of persons accused of espionage on behalf of Latvia and England, and another arising out of the insurrection in the Caucasus. Every Thursday during February, March, and April 1925 several dozen persons were taken to execution, and during February and March the personnel of my room was completely renewed twice over. Despite this, our room, No. 13, had the reputation of being a very lucky room, as a still greater number of victims were taken from the other rooms.

One Thursday my friend, the Lett Karlusha, who slept in the bed next mine, committed suicide. It happened as follows. We were not allowed to have knives in the room, but we managed, through the "workmen" on duty in our passage, to get hold of a small home-made knife, turned out in the prison workshop, with which to cut our bread. We used it successfully

for two days, and then it suddenly disappeared. We hunted for it, and then decided that the warder had searched the room while we were at exercise, found the knife, and confiscated it. We all dismissed the matter from our minds. The Thursday following the disappearance of the knife Karlusha was particularly nervous. When the noise of the arriving lorry was heard under the window, and they began to call out the names of those who were to be shot, the warder, to our horror, called out Karlusha's name:

"Citizen Bikke. Without things."

I could not remain lying on my bed; I rose and began to walk about the half-dark room, while several men who had been summoned dressed hurriedly, unable, in their nervous agitation, to find the sleeves of their garments. We noticed that Karlusha was kneeling between my bed and his own, with his face to the wall. Colonel Zaretsky and an engineer named Weinberg, who, also very much upset, were walking with me at the far end of the room, said to me:

"You're friendly with him, and you've strong nerves. Go and say something to him. This silence alone is enough to drive one out of one's mind."

I made an effort and had taken a few steps in Karlusha's direction when I suddenly noticed that he was moving his hand underneath his sweater. Supposing that he was praying, and not knowing, in my agitation, what to do, I went up to a young engineer, named Sokolsky, whose name also had just been called, and who was weeping quietly. At that moment the warder shouted again:

"Sokolsky, Bikke, Vatadze, Grevenitz. Hurry up!"

As he called the names Karlusha fell on his back, and a dark stain appeared on the white sweater, just over the stomach. The poor fellow had ripped up his stomach with the blunt knife for which we had been conducting a hopeless search. One of the usual boards that served for beds was brought, and Karlusha was placed on it and carried out. A few minutes later one of us looked out of the window and saw Karlusha, already half-dead, fastened to his board, packed into the lorry along with a

number of men in chains with tubes projecting from their mouths.

This last fact I heard much later, for my nerves could stand no more, and I became hysterical. I was taken to hospital and spent nearly five weeks there in a state of extreme nervous excitement.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Sionists and Anarchists—A Short Way with Rebels—The Dwarf Vania—A “Bourgeois Spy” of Twelve—My Friend Baron Schilder—I Obtain Pleasant Employment

CONDITIONS IN THE PRISON HOSPITAL were much better than in the Haas hospital. The place was very clean, and there was no criminal element at all among the patients. When I left the hospital I was placed in room No. 12, next door to my old room. All the rooms, of course, were filled to overflowing. Among my new comrades were a number of Sionist Jews, all young students. The rest of the Sionists were in other rooms, and at exercise time they all met, sang the Sionist hymn demonstratively, and tried to show in every way that prison had no terrors for them. They had been five months in prison already.

One day twelve Anarchist students and several sailors were brought into our room. Hitherto all the Anarchists had been confined in three special rooms, but as it was proposed to dispatch them to the Solovky and Siberia in the near future, the prison governor, fearing a demonstration, had decided to divide them up into small parties and distribute them over a number of different rooms. Twelve men, who had been sentenced to imprisonment in the Solovky, were allotted to our room. They were very noisy, cursed at the warders, quarrelled among themselves, and finally started a brawl with the Sionist Jews.

One Wednesday the Anarchists summoned to join the Solovetsky transport refused to leave the room, declaring that they would not go except under compulsion. When the prison governor appeared with a revolver in his hand and ten warders with whips, all the Anarchists flung themselves on the ground and shouted:

“Down with the executioners and usurpers! Long live free human reason! We demand a public trial! Down with the *provocateurs!*”

At a sign from Bogdanoff the warders began to thrash the Anarchists with their whips and stamp on them with the heels of their boots. Bogdanoff himself struck one student in the face with his revolver butt. Then all the Anarchists were seized by the feet and dragged into the passage and down the staircase. Even we in our room could hear the bumping of the poor wretches' heads as they bounded from step to step.

The Anarchists in the neighbouring rooms were tamed by similar methods. Probably some rumour of their severe punishment reached the farthest end of the corridor, for a fairly large group of Anarchists who had been lodged in the most distant rooms passed our door on their own legs, and without any demonstration, and went quietly down the staircase.

The Sionists in our room were to be sent to Siberia with a transport the Friday after the incident with the Anarchists I have just described.

The lamentable example of the Anarchists' protest, it need hardly be said, compelled the young Jews to abandon a rebellion which they had contemplated. Two hours before the Sionists' transport was due to leave, the prison governor entered our room and shouted:

"Now then, Palestine Cossacks and nobles of Jerusalem! Fall in!"

When all the Sionists, thoroughly frightened, had formed up in one rank, Bogdanoff addressed them more or less as follows:

"You have all seen how the Soviet power insists on the law being carried out. Your transport leaves in two hours. Get ready. It must all be done quietly and peacefully. Do you understand?"

One Jew, the weakest of them all, a fellow with huge round spectacles, dared to ask:

"What do you call the law in Soviet Russia?"

Bogdanoff walked straight up to the inquirer, seized him by the shirt collar with his left hand, and with his right hand, in a quiet, deliberate manner, gave him two blows in the face which sent his spectacles flying from his nose.



THE KREMLIN, MOSCOW

The Sionists were led out of the room two hours later in perfect order. I do not know what became of them.

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The smallest Soviet criminal was undoubtedly the dwarf Vania. He was 2 feet 9½ inches in height. He was twenty-four years old, and, in spite of his diminutive stature, was quite fully proportioned and quite normally developed intellectually. He had been born and lived in the town of Jamburg, close to the Russo-Estonian frontier, where his parents owned a small house and shop. Vania finished his studies at a commercial school, and during the civil war served as an orderly on the staff of a formation belonging to the White Army. When the White Army retreated, Vania and his married sister accompanied its fragments on to Estonian territory. In Estonia he had to undergo the usual privations of an *émigré*. He often said to me, when relating his adventures:

"You know, Mr. Cederholm, I'd often have liked to make an end of myself. I walked and walked, looking for work, but nobody would take me. They thought it was a child that had come, and had no confidence in me. Life in this world is very hard for small people."

In 1924, seduced by the prospects of "Nep", Vania decided to return to his kinsmen. He had not money enough to pay for a visa, and decided to cross the frontier without one. He reached a Soviet frontier post and related his story in detail to a Soviet official, whereupon he was arrested and sent by stages to Petrograd. When I met him in prison, he was spending his seventh month in various gaols. One evening, early in the spring, Vania was called out of the room and informed that he was to be transported to the Solovetsky camp for five years for espionage and counter-revolutionary activities. The transport was to leave in an hour, and the poor little creature had not merely no warm clothes, but not even boots. We fitted him out as well as we could from our meagre wardrobes, and he left us for the Far North, destined for certain death. "Life in this world is hard for small people!"

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A boy of twelve, an Estonian, was for some time in the same room as myself. Left alone in his own country, an orphan, the boy had decided to go to his eldest brother, who was working in one of the Petrograd factories. Having no money to pay for a visa, he crossed the frontier without one. He was arrested at a frontier guard post and at last found himself in the Tcheka prison in the Shpalernaja Street. He was charged with espionage on behalf of Estonia and England. The boy could not read or write properly, could speak hardly any Russian, and spent whole days blowing soap-bubbles or making aeroplanes out of newspapers and black bread. One night he returned from interrogation in tears and, when we asked him what had happened, related to us in his lingo—part Estonian, part Russian, part German—the following tragi-comic episode:

"The examining judge shouted a lot. The examining judge cursed. The examining judge said I was a *champion*. That's bad, that's awfully bad. All champions get killed."

The story was punctuated throughout by the lad's desperate sobs, and we had difficulty in consoling him. He had confused the words *shpion* (spy) and *tchampion* (champion), but as a matter of fact he did not know what either word meant; he only felt that he was being accused of something very serious on account of the examining judge's threats. The Tcheka, morbidly suspicious as ever, had seen a spy of the *bourgeoisie* in a semi-illiterate boy!

Soon after this (after Karlusha's suicide) I was removed to hospital and lost sight of the little Estonian.

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In the month of May a lull set in. The rooms were less overcrowded than they had been, and on Thursdays not more than ten or twelve persons were taken away to be shot. This could be guessed from the fact that only one half-ton lorry came to fetch the victims. Only two men were taken from our room to be shot in the whole of May—a Jew sentenced for trafficking in contraband, and the former head of the printing-office for State papers, Eppinger by name.

At the end of May my great friend, Baron Schilder, formerly a captain in the artillery, was sent to the Solovky. He was a nephew of the old Baron Schilder, who had been imprisoned with me in room No. 13 in connection with the Lyceum trial and had died in prison. Although Captain Schilder had never been a pupil at the Lyceum, he was dragged into the case because he had sometimes visited his uncle, and the Tcheka had charged him with "failing to give information". Captain Schilder, while in prison, was employed in the locksmith's workshop, and through his influence I was given a post on the clerical staff of the workshop after he had been sent to the Solovky.

This was one of the best periods of my prison life. I used to leave the room for the workshop the first thing in the morning, return to the room for dinner, go to the workshop again at 2 p.m., and remain there till 6 p.m. It was absolutely impossible to escape from the workshop, for it was situated right in the centre of the prison and was cut off from the outside world by eight gates guarded by sentries and warders. It was possible, however, to leave the workshop on one pretext or another and get into the central courtyard, where I could warm myself in the sunshine and sometimes meet prisoners from different sections of the prison taking exercise. The head of the workshop was a fellow called Ivan Ivanovitch, who was always half-drunk. Through him I sometimes got some brandy or vodka, which I drank alone in my "office". Twelve engineers, arrested in connection with the notorious Putiloff works bribery case, were employed in the workshop. I refrained from initiating them into my solitary orgies, for I had no confidence in their discretion and was afraid of betraying Ivan Ivanovitch. I hoped for much from the master locksmith, and felt that sooner or later, despite all difficulties, I should succeed in escaping from the prison. Step by step, and with the greatest caution, I questioned Ivan Ivanovitch about the prison regulations, the method of securing a pass, and so on. A vague scheme for making my escape was gradually ripening in my brain.

In June a certain liveliness again became noticeable in the prison; over sixty persons were crammed into our room, which

was calculated to accommodate thirty-five. Dozens of condemned men were again taken away on Thursdays and hundreds transported to the Solovky and Siberia. The stuffy room, packed tight with humanity, was absolutely unbearable in the daytime, and I was delighted to leave it for my dark, silent cubby-hole in the workshop.

CHAPTER XXXV

Departure for the Solovky—Three Days' Rations—Katia, the Hunger Strike Champion—The Story of a Brave Girl—Tcheka's Campaign against Crime—Ninety-four in one Carriage—My Travelling Companions—A Hideous Prospect

IN JULY MY INTERVIEWS were suddenly stopped, which distressed me very much. I continued to receive parcels regularly, but their examination became stricter than ever. At the beginning of August I was unexpectedly removed from my employment in the workshop; the same thing happened to my Finnish fellow-countrymen who were working in the joiner's workshop. These Finns, carpenters by trade, had crossed the Russian frontier without permits, believing that they would find better conditions of labour in Soviet Russia than in Finland. Instead of being given work, they were accused of espionage and put in prison.

I read in the Soviet *Krasnaja Gazeta* that an espionage organization working on behalf of Finland had been detected in Petrograd, and that our Consul-General was seriously compromised. One result of this absurd affair was that all the Finlanders in Soviet prisons at the time were subjected to reprisals.

About seven o'clock on the evening of August 26, 1925, a warder called my name in a loud voice and ordered me to put my things together as quickly as possible. My preparations did not take long, as I had scarcely any things beyond my toilet accessories and bedding. I received all necessities regularly from the Consulate once a week. I packed into my basket four handkerchiefs, two pairs of thin socks, pyjamas, toilet accessories, a jug, a teapot, and some food. There was very little food, as it was Wednesday, and we received parcels on Fridays. With the basket in one hand and a bundle of bedding in the other I went out into the corridor, whence I was taken to the office.

In the corridor outside the office were a large party with

their things, evidently ready to depart with a long-distance transport. The prison governor read me the decision of a "special meeting" of the Central College of the Tcheka ordering me to be imprisoned in the Solovetsky camp for three years. On hearing this order I said that it had been communicated to me ten months before, and that my transportation to the Solovky had been postponed because negotiations were proceeding between the Finnish and Soviet Governments with a view to my being exchanged for Communists imprisoned in Finland.

"I know nothing about that," the prison governor said. "My orders are to send you to the Solovky to-day."

I replied, quite reasonably:

"You are bound to send me to be medically examined first. Besides, I have no money, or food, or underclothing, or anything at all. At least let me telephone to the Consulate and ask them to send all the things I need to the station."

"It's too late now for a medical examination," was the reply. "You will be examined at Kem. We will send your request to the Consulate by telephone ourselves. You will receive a complete outfit and shoes in the Solovky. You're worrying yourself about nothing."

Long after, when I was back in Finland, I found out that no one had dreamed of informing the Consulate of my sudden departure and my request for help.

We were formed up in a single rank, the escort commander checked us off on his list, and each of us was given a kilogramme of black bread and three small salt fish.

I took the bread, but gave the fish to an old man standing next to me who looked like a peasant. There were several women in our party, apparently members of the educated class, four priests, a few peasants, a few ex-soldiers, a very feeble old man, and fifteen students. The party consisted of forty-three persons in all.

Two carts were standing in the courtyard. Our belongings were placed in one, and the women, the sickly old man, and a lame priest took seats in the other. Before marching the

party off the escorting soldiers began to load their rifles, and the escort commander gave the order, "Safety-catches up". A sickly-looking little woman with a tired face who was standing next to me cried out in alarm. She looked at me with eyes dilated with terror, seized me by the arm, and anxiously asked me:

"What are they going to do? Did you see? They've put cartridges into their rifles!"

I reassured the pale, frightened little creature as well as I could, explaining that this was "customary", and that it was a very good thing the rifles had their safety-catches up. While conversing with the lady, I could not help noticing that under the unbuttoned collar of her English overcoat was pinned an oval brooch containing a miniature of a child of five or six. I thought of my own family, and my heart grew heavy.

"Women—take your seats in the cart! Carts to the front! Prisoners—keep close up!"

The escort fell into their places, and we set off in column of fours for the Far North, for the island "of misery and tears".

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A fine rain was falling. The inhabitants of Soviet Petrograd hurried along with bent heads in the August twilight, glancing timidly at us. We proceeded rather slowly, as an old soldier and two old priests could not keep up. In the Znamenskaja Street, before we had reached the Nevsky Prospect, the escort commander ordered us to halt. The escort surrounded us and joined their hands so as to form a chain. Three priests were taken out of the ranks and placed on the luggage-cart, and we moved forward again, now much faster. On reaching the Nicholas station we left the main entrance on our right, passed through a gate, and walked along the permanent way for over half a mile till we came to a carriage standing alone in a siding. Its windows were fitted with thick iron bars.

We were all led into an enclosure formed of boards, with no roof, and the escort took up their position at the entrance. The enclosure was fairly large, with a floor of boards, and we sat

down on our luggage to await further orders. The sickly-looking little lady who had been so frightened by the loaded rifles was again next to me. On my left was a tall, well-built gentleman with hair going grey, dressed in a Circassian tunic and a little sheepskin cap of the type called a *Kubanka*, sitting on a sack. Noticing that the lady next to me was very cold, he took off the rolled-up cloak which hung about his shoulders, unfolded it, and said, with a scarcely perceptible Eastern accent:

"Allow me to offer you this cloak. You'll be quite frozen by the time these blackguards put us into our sleeping-car."

Then, as the lady made no movement, the Circassian skilfully threw the cloak over her shoulders, and said, laughing, as he turned to a group of ladies:

"It's a large cloak; wouldn't someone else like to share it?"

A very young girl in a black headcloth and quite a thin black overcoat, who looked very ill, responded to the invitation. She sat down by the thin lady, put her arm round her waist, and nestled up against her affectionately. The Circassian gave an angry little cough, lit a cigarette, and said to me, indicating the girl:

"What brutes they are! They're sending children to this hell. They can't be criminals! How old are you, *baryshnia*?"

The girl was embarrassed and did not answer, but her neighbour looked at her lovingly and said to us:

"Katia's a brave girl. She's full of pluck. She's been in prison for five years, and she's gone without food for seventy-eight days altogether at different times."

The Circassian and I regarded Katia, the hunger strike champion, with eyes of astonishment.

The story of Katia's prison life is worth recording. Her father had been a deacon in one of the towns of South Russia. During the civil war her brother had been an officer in the White Army. When the army retreated, father and daughter were seized by the Bolsheviks; the deacon was shot and the daughter thrust into the Tcheka prison at Odessa, but she was soon released and, making her way to Kharkoff, took up her abode with an old aunt. In 1920 the Tcheka intercepted a letter which

Katia's brother had written to her from abroad. They arrested Katia because, according to their information, her brother was playing a very conspicuous part as a counter-revolutionary among the Russian *émigrés*.

In the Butyrka prison in Moscow the following proposal was made to the girl. She was to write to her brother and tell him that she was imprisoned as a hostage for him, and that if he returned she would be set at liberty, while he would receive a light punishment and have to sign an undertaking not to leave Russian territory. Katia knew the value of Tchekist promises, and indignantly rejected the treacherous proposal. The frail but courageous girl was confined first in the inner prison of the Tcheka in Moscow (the Lubianka) and later in the Butyrka prison in the same city; it was then decided to send her to the Solovky *for an indefinite period*, or, to be more precise, until her brother returned to Russia. During the seven years she had spent in prison Katia had declared a hunger strike seven times, and, as the lady had said, had fasted for seventy-eight days in all. For the last three years, since the death of her aunt, she had had no help whatever from any outside source and had remained alive thanks entirely to the sympathy of various women friends among the prisoners.

The thin little lady's story presented no feature of interest. Her husband had left the country without a permit, he had written to his wife, the Tcheka had intercepted the letter, the unfortunate woman had been accused of failing to give information and espionage, and the upshot was that she had been sent to the Solovky for five years.

It was quite dark by now. I was shivering from head to foot, and began to walk up and down in the enclosure to get warm. I was joined by a fat little Jew, a broker on the Bourse, sentenced to transportation to the Solovky for speculating in foreign currency. He was much agitated, as rumours were going round that our party was to be joined by a party of deportees from Moscow, and this party was said to include a large number of criminals. This rumour had some foundation, for a decree had been issued in the previous November ordering the Tcheka to take measures

to put a stop to the increasing criminality and hooliganism, and the Tcheka, with its usual reckless energy, had begun to send everyone with a criminal record to the Solovetsky Islands and Siberia.

A criminal record, in Soviet Russia, means two sentences inflicted by the courts for criminal offences. Thus, according to the new decree as interpreted by the Tcheka, every person who had just served a term in prison, provided that it was his second, automatically became liable to the extremely severe penalty of imprisonment in the Solovetsky concentration camp, which for the majority of the prisoners was equivalent to a death sentence. The result of this administrative effort to suppress crime was that every offender who had just served a term of imprisonment immediately endeavoured to commit further crimes as quickly as possible in order that he might be caught and imprisoned afresh for his new offences, thus escaping the horrors of transportation.

The party which joined us from the clearing prison was fifty-one strong. Fortunately for us, there were not more than twenty criminals among the new arrivals, and as they were only a small minority, we were assured at least of peace among ourselves.

As I walked up and down I looked expectantly at the outline of the solitary convicts' carriage, anticipating that another carriage would be coupled on to it at any moment. To my great astonishment the escort commander ordered the whole of our party, ninety-four strong, to get into *one* carriage.

The carriage was divided lengthways by a partition of iron bars, less than three feet from one side of the carriage. A narrow corridor was thus formed, in which there were always five armed sentries, who were changed every two hours.

The whole area of the carriage behind the bars was divided into a number of compartments by transverse partitions. Fifteen or sixteen persons, with their things, were placed in each compartment. Each compartment was divided into three tiers, formed of seats placed one above the other; four or five persons with their belongings were placed on each tier. Sitting or moving was out of the question; we could only lie down, and the escort

insisted that we should lie with our heads towards the bars, as they counted our heads by the light of a candle every half-hour. The seats were pressed close together so as to form a continuous surface, and we lay four of us on each tier, packed tightly against one another. Every time one changed one's position one's neighbours protested. The seats stopped short eighteen inches from the bars, and this interval of space enabled one to get to the lavatory, which was at the end of the carriage on our side of the bars.

The lavatory door was not shut, and an offensive smell issued from it. It was extremely difficult to get to the lavatory, and for invalids and elderly people lying on the two topmost tiers it was wellnigh impossible. All the women were placed in one compartment, and they were at any rate better off than we were, for there were only twelve of them.

I was lucky enough to have good travelling companions in my compartment, and not a single criminal. My tier was shared by two peasants, charged with counter-revolution, and a Czech, a physical instructor and ex-Communist. He had been accused of having relations with the Czechoslovakian Consulate, expelled from the party, and sent to the Solovky for five years.

To judge from the bumps, our carriage was being coupled on a train. Some men came through the carriage; they must have been high officials of the Tcheke, for the escort commander went up to them with a report and stood at attention while speaking to them. A few minutes before the train left, a tall, very young man in a sports suit was brought to the barrier. He spoke to the escort commander in a low voice; then they both walked slowly along the corridor, and the escort commander, candle in hand, closely examined the recumbent forms. All the other compartments were even more overcrowded than ours, so one of the escort pushed back the door in the barrier opposite our compartment and the young man crawled on to our shelf. He had only a handbag with him. It was such a crush that the thought of the three days' journey was terrifying. I was beginning to feel sick already from the stuffiness, the

smell from the lavatory, and human perspiration, but I could not even turn over.

When the train was moving slowly off, yet another young man was placed in our compartment, and at the orders of the escort commander one of the peasants who lay alongside me climbed on to the topmost tier. Some cursing began up above, but it stopped instantaneously when the commander drew his revolver and cried, "Silence at once!"

I felt that every turn of the wheels was making my escape from the clutches of the Tcheka more and more impossible. I was now completely in "their" power. I felt that all hope of returning to my country was gone, and that a slow, horrible death by torture awaited me.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Horrible Travelling Conditions—Tchekist Fellow-prisoners—How the Solovetsky Camp is Staffed—The Czech Saga—A Death in Our Carriage—Revolver Play—The Case of Captain Reilly—Criminals Assault a Tchekist

THE FIRST NIGHT of my journey was so horrible that I even thought of my life in the solitary cell No. 26 as a state of bliss I should never know again. With people crushing against me on each side and the air filled with stench, I could not get a minute's sleep. One of my neighbours, an old peasant, coughed straight into my face all night, and early in the morning began to spit blood. Fleas and lice attacked us vigorously, and the movements of the people who lay on the topmost shelf showered these disgusting insects and clouds of dust on our faces. To crown everything, the lame old priest, who lay on the upper tier, was unable to get to the lavatory, though desiring to do so; and as there were interstices between the seats, we suffered horribly. It should be added that our belongings were heaped up close to us, which made the overcrowding and dirt much worse. Many of my fellow-travellers, before arriving in Petrograd, had passed through several temporary prisons *en route*; these prisons are always appallingly overcrowded and swarm with insects of every kind.

The dawn made things even worse. The darkness had to some degree concealed the horror of our surroundings, but in the pale light of the northern autumn morning an indescribable picture of human suffering was revealed. Pallid, tormented faces, heaps of dirty clothing lying about, pools of blood—from my consumptive neighbour—and saliva on the floor, and the poor old man's urine dripping from above.

One of the young men, whose name was Kalugin, and I somehow extricated ourselves from the heap of recumbent figures and sat doubled up on the edge of the seat, with our legs dangling in the space between the seat and the bars. Kalugin was a pronounced type of degenerate; he had ill-proportioned

features, protruding eyes, thick shapeless lips, and hardly any chin. A good deal of cocaine was sewn into the tails of his jacket, and at intervals, with some ingenuity, he conveyed a pinch of the powder to his nose.

I had about seven roubles on me—the whole of my private capital, which I had been able to save in prison from the money paid out to me weekly from my private account for the purchase of newspapers and cigarettes. The rest of the money standing to my name was not paid out to me, but I was told that it would be transferred to my private account at the Solovetsky camp.

At about one o'clock we stopped at a station, and I persuaded one of the escort to buy me some white bread, eggs, and milk, as my basket was covered with blood and some other fluid, and the small supply of food I had with me had become useless to me. My neighbours, however, were less particular, and ate it all with avidity, even my ration of black bread, which was very dirty and quite moist after lying about on the seat among my other belongings. At first the soldier was unwilling to do as I asked him, but Kalugin called the escort commander and whispered a few words to him, and I was brought, in exchange for two roubles, a litre of nasty milk (in my teapot), six hard-boiled eggs, a kilogramme of grey bread, and 100 grammes of bacon.

I noticed that the escort allowed Kalugin and the other young man, whose name was Kostin, to pass through the barrier and took them to their lavatory. All these privileges, and the whispered conversations with the escort commander, were soon explained. Kostin and Kalugin were Tcherists who had been sentenced to be shot, but had had their sentences commuted to ten years' imprisonment in the Solovetsky camp. They had both been intentionally placed in our compartment because in the other compartments there were either criminals or people from the Butyrka prison in Moscow who knew both Kostin and Kalugin, and it was feared that some act of vengeance might be attempted against the Tcherists. As there were a number of old men in our compartment, there was greater liberty of movement than in the others, and the ex-Tcherists were comparatively safe there.

On the second night Kalugin, who was continually under the influence of cocaine, related to me some episodes from his past career. He was twenty-four, and had become a secret agent of the Tcheka six years earlier. During those six years he had served in dozens of different special sections of the Tcheka—now as a travelling courier abroad, now as a secret investigator of the activities of railway employees, now in the “camouflage” section of the Moscow Tcheka.

I could not discover exactly why he had been sentenced to be shot and the sentence commuted to imprisonment in the Solovetsky camp. His disconnected anecdotes, however, made it clear that the Tcheka treats its employees with great severity, and that none of them is insured against intrigues, denunciations, and the guile of *provocateurs*. The College of the Tcheka usually pronounces sentence of death on Tchekists who have committed any misdemeanour, but these sentences are almost always commuted to ten years' imprisonment in the Solovetsky camp. All the Tchekists serving terms of imprisonment are appointed to administrative posts in the camp, and endeavour by zealous service to earn their pardon or a reduction of their sentences.

In the whole territory of the Solovetsky concentration camp, which includes the islands and the clearing station on the mainland, Kem, there are only three free men—the commandant of the Solovetsky camp, his assistant, and the commandant of the Kem clearing station. All the other employees, whether members of the administrative staff or warders, are without exception Tchekist prisoners. The Tchekist prisoners are a most heterogeneous assortment—spies, *agents provocateurs*, executioners, heads of numerous provincial branches of the Tcheka, examining judges, members of prison staffs, etc. Naturally this villainous gang, in their efforts to earn their pardon, treat the prisoners entrusted to their charge with shocking cruelty, and this is one of the many reasons why the Solovetsky concentration camp has gained such notoriety and many prefer instantaneous death to a long imprisonment in that hell.

Just as hunger is the best seasoning for food, weariness is the

best sleeping-draught. Profiting by the fact that three of my fellow-travellers were unable to lie down any longer and sat up bent double, with their legs thrust into the space between the seats and the bars, I endeavoured to go to sleep and, contrary to all expectation, succeeded. When I woke it was already dark, and the fleas were beginning to bite unbearably. Kalugin had become quite unaccountable for his actions; he was very pale and had an idiotic smile on his face. He was obviously quite stupefied by cocaine. I sat up again on the edge of the seat with my knees against the bars, and the Czech Communist installed himself alongside me. He was a capital fellow, a cheery sportsman, and at the same time most tactful and considerate. His name was Saga. Noticing that he was regretfully throwing away the soft part of his black bread, which had been soiled, and was greedily gnawing the crust, I offered him an egg and a piece of grey bread, which I had hung up on the bars wrapped in a handkerchief.

"You haven't got much yourself," Saga said. "It doesn't matter, I shall get along somehow. It's not the first time I've been hungry."

Saga had come to Russia with the Czech legions during the civil war, and had been induced by the liberal promises of the Soviet Government to remain in Moscow, where he obtained a post as an inspector of physical culture. A genuine Communist himself, he soon perceived that the new régime in Russia was not Communism at all. He therefore resolved to get home to Prague, and applied to the Czechoslovak Consulate in Moscow for a visa. Saga had evidently talked carelessly, or else he had been watched, for the day after his visit to the Consulate he was arrested, and the Czech visa on his passport was, in the eyes of the Tcheka, sufficient ground for a charge of espionage and discrediting the Soviet power. He was kept for five months in the Butyrka prison while his case was being investigated, and then sentenced to three years' imprisonment in the Solovetsky camp.

Exhausting as it was to sit doubled up, it was better than lying among filth. I explained matters to the escort commander,

and asked that the old priest who had caused all the trouble might be removed to some other place; but he only looked me up and down and said:

"It's no business of yours. You're not going for a pleasure trip! It's still worse in other compartments, but no one complains."

Evidently things were indeed worse in other compartments, for at dawn, when we stopped at a halting-place, a disturbance broke out in one of them; the prisoners were begging the guards to take away the body of a comrade who had just died, a consumptive Tartar from the Crimea. The noise grew louder, and prisoners and guards began to abuse one another. While this was going on an American engineer named Chevalier was flinging himself about in a state of hysteria and shouting. The escort commander fired at him and shot him through the shoulder.

I made this American's acquaintance a long time after this incident in the hospital at Kem, where he had had an arm amputated. Chevalier had belonged to the British legion in the Caucasus in the civil war, and had remained at Tiflis, being unwilling to leave a Russian woman who had fascinated him. He came from the State of Louisiana.

After much trouble he had succeeded in getting his marriage legalized and obtaining permission for his wife and himself to leave Russia. A short time before they were due to leave he was arrested on the charge of espionage and sent to the Solovky.

Chevalier had had to lie all night with the dead Tartar's body close beside him; and before this he had travelled by stages from the Caucasus to Petrograd, which took three weeks, and spent short periods in several overcrowded provincial gaols. Naturally, his nerves could not stand the strain; he went out of his mind for the time being and began to shout and yell. After the escort commander had shot him through the shoulder he was left without medical attention for nearly ten hours, for it was not till we reached Sorok station, on the evening of the second day of our journey, that a *Feldsher* came and bound him

up properly. The Tartar's body was removed at the same station.

The Czech Saga soon lay down and went to sleep; I remained sitting alone, and sat on till dawn. It was not long before the Tchkist Kostin joined me. He seemed very ill; he was, in fact, suffering from epilepsy, of which we had proof at the end of the third day, when he had a fit. But nothing was done about it; we ourselves restrained him when in convulsions, and he remained lying in our compartment until we reached Kem.

Kostin was evidently not on good terms with Kalugin. Taking advantage of Kalugin's condition, he hastened to "warn" me against him; he told me "in confidence" that he was a Tchkist and a rogue. The fact that he himself was a Tchkist he naturally left unmentioned.

Kostin related to me a very interesting episode in Kalugin's career. When he was in a common room in the Butyrka prison, he took too much cocaine and, as usually happens, became exceedingly loquacious and "gave himself away". He told his room-mates that he had executed very important commissions for the Tcheke. In July 1924 he had been ordered to photograph the Englishman Captain Reilly, who was supposed to have been wounded near the Finnish frontier. Captain Reilly was impersonated by a Tchkist made up to play the part; he had, in fact, been murdered in Moscow in June 1924 by the Tchkist Ibrahim. The Tcheke, for reasons of its own, wished to "get up" a scene in which Captain Reilly was represented as being wounded near the Finnish frontier, and went to the length of having the whole scene photographed.

When the Tcheke found out that Kalugin had "blabbed" in prison, he was transferred to solitary confinement. He paid dearly for his loquacity, for he was sentenced to be shot, and his sentence was commuted to ten years' imprisonment in the Solovetsky camp. If he had not been a cocaineist and a chatterbox, Kalugin would have got off lightly, as he was in prison for raping a girl, and that is not considered a great crime in Soviet Russia, especially for a Tchkist.

Kostin preserved a modest silence as to the reason for his

being in the same room as Kalugin in prison. I think it was he who told his chiefs that Kalugin had opened his heart to his room-mates.

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On the morning of the third day of our journey the escort was relieved, and the new escort commander was less willing to grant privileges to our Tchekist fellow-travellers. He moved the old priest and two other old men on the top tier three compartments farther forward and put four criminals in with us in their place. Two of them were quite young fellows, with their chests, hands, and even their backs, covered with tattoo marks. The two others were older and bore themselves with great dignity, as a real bandit is expected to do by prison tradition.

At one of the stations the escort brought boiling water for the first time and poured it into our jugs and teapots. As Kalugin was getting off the seat to go to the lavatory a teapot of boiling water was dropped on to him from above and scalded his neck and ears. He called the escort commander at once, but nothing definite could be established. There were ten men on the two upper tiers in our compartment, and it was impossible for the escort commander to deal with the matter.

"We'll look into it when we get to Kem," was the escort commander's Solomonic judgment.

As Kalugin was passing along to the lavatory, another teapot was dropped on him in one of the compartments and cut his forehead. In another compartment someone shouted:

"There goes a dirty spy!"

"It's all right; we'll be at Kem very soon," said Kalugin in a loud voice, as he crawled into our coffin, his face distorted with anger. "The bill 'll be presented there. There's no joking there."

I again succeeded in getting several eggs, some bread and bacon through one of the escort at a station, and I began to feel a little better.

Most of the prisoners had neither money nor food, as nearly all of them had been summoned to join the transport with-

out any warning. They had therefore been obliged to satisfy their needs during a three days' journey with the kilo of black bread and three miserable salt fish which had been issued in Petrograd before we left the prison.

I myself was in the last stage of exhaustion, but what must the state of those prisoners have been who had been brought from the Caucasus, the Crimea, and the Ukraine!

We all heaved a sigh of relief when we reached Kem station. Alas! our real sufferings were only beginning.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Arrival at Kem—Michelson of the Crimea—A Triple Execution—The First Night's Work—Camp Routine—Swarm of Secret Agents—I am Put on Light Work—A Useless Task

OUR CARRIAGE was uncoupled at Kem station, and we stood there for two hours. At last we moved off again and came to the clearing camp, seven and a half miles from the railway station.

It was about 6 p.m. on August 29, 1925, when we arrived at the camp. For the first time since we had begun our journey three days earlier we were able to breathe fresh air and rub our limbs, which had grown stiff from lying continuously in one position. An autumnal drizzle was falling, but it was still light, for in these latitudes, at the end of August, the sun does not set until nearly nine o'clock. We were made to fall in with our belongings in our hands. Then we were ordered to load the things on to two carts which had arrived and then fall in again. I was on the left flank, and the women who had travelled with us were formed up next to me. In addition to the lady in the English overcoat, whom I knew already, and Katia, the remaining ladies, I saw, belonged to the *intelligentsia*. One of them, an Austrian, did not understand Russian, and I had to translate several phrases into German for her. The engineer Chevalier was lifted out of the railway carriage and placed on a cart with several old men.

We were checked off once again, and then moved off in column of fours, surrounded by our escort. We went through a gloomy, typically northern hamlet, passed some huge piles of timber, and after a march of twenty minutes came to an open space surrounded by several lines of barbed wire. The yellow wooden gates were adorned with the Soviet arms, the sickle and hammer, and below these was the inscription "Special clearing station of the administration of the Solovetsky camps for special purposes."¹ The gates were opened wide; we passed in and

¹ This body is commonly known as the "Uslon", from the initials of the corresponding Russian words.

came to a wide space with a flooring of planks, on both sides of which were six long wooden one-storied huts. A fine rain was still falling, and beyond the huts we could see a grey, uninviting sea, some rocks, and scanty marshland vegetation.

The archpriest Avvakoum,¹ who came to these parts as a missionary at the beginning of the seventeenth century, wrote to his wife: "When I looked on these melancholy regions, heaviness and winter entered my heart." Something more than heaviness entered our hearts when we saw a company drawn up wearing the uniform of the special service troops (Tcheka troops), and about forty Tchekists in leather jackets and caps with red bands. At this moment we realized the utter hopelessness of our position; here the Tcheka exercised an uncontrolled domination through its worst and most unprincipled representatives.

We were all formed up in line, including the women, and the camp commandant addressed us in roughly the following terms:

"You have all been sent here for serious crimes, and the object of your imprisonment in a concentration camp is your reformation. Remember that the camp is under military law, and that absolute obedience is expected of you. The slightest offence will be visited with the most severe punishment, possibly shooting. Comrade Michelson will be immediately in charge of you. You will go through a moral quarantine here at Kem, and you will then be sent to the Solovetsky camp."

Comrade Michelson, a man with a very worn face, spectacles, and a crooked leg, walked along our front and examined us attentively.

This was the well-known "Comrade Michelson of the Crimea", who, after the retreat of General Wrangel, himself shot 3,000 White Guard prisoners and their wives and children with a machine-gun. He had won further glory by a series of appalling atrocities at Pskoff and later at the Kholmogory concentration camp, near Archangel. It was said that he had been

¹ One of the sect known as the "Old Believers"; he was burned alive in the seventeenth century.

sent to the Solovetsky concentration camp as the result of intrigues on the part of his colleagues in the Tcheke, who feared his growing influence with Dzerzhinsky.

The women, after a roll-call, he sent to the women's hut, and us men to hut No. 5.

Our quarters, like all the other eleven huts, were a wooden shed 145 feet long and 65 feet wide. Two tiers of board beds ran along the whitewashed walls and a row of exactly similar beds extended across the middle of the hut, with two openings to allow free passage. Two round stoves, one on each side of the hut, completed the furniture. The hut was quite empty, and was intended to accommodate parties passing through to the Solovetsky camp. The other huts were all crammed, for, as winter approaches, large parties of prisoners are sent to Kem from the Solovetsky camp to cut timber.

We had hardly flung our possessions down on the board beds when we were ordered to fall in again. Michelson came in with several Tcherists and began to examine both our belongings and our persons, for which purpose we were all stripped naked. It was horribly cold, for the place was not heated and the doors were wide open. As soon as the examination of our things was over, one of the Tcherists read from a list the names of all the ex-Tcherists in our party and, to our great astonishment, more than ten men walked forward. Two of them were of such pre-eminently respectable appearance that I would never have believed it if anyone had pointed them out to me as Tcherists.

All the Tcherists in our party were taken at once to a special hut. Then I realized for the first time what "presenting the bill" meant in Tcheke language. Kalugin went up to Michelson and spoke to him in a low voice, indicating the four criminals who had travelled in our compartment. Michelson looked at them and said quietly:

"Who threw a teapot at Comrade Kalugin? Confess at once. If you don't confess, I shall shoot you all four this minute. Look alive now!"

In a minute one of the young fellows was handed over. He

was led off. The two men in the other compartment who had thrown a teapot were discovered by the same method. They were led off too. Half an hour later we were all marched to the part of the camp which ran along the seashore and shown the three bodies lying on the ground with bullets through their heads. Kalugin had shot all three with his own hand.

At that moment it became clear to all of us what the "Uslon" was like. There, by those still warm bodies, in the rain, by the grey, mournful sea, we were divided into two parties and taken to the "main street" of the camp, the wide space with a flooring of planks that ran between the huts. Each party was surrounded by Tchekists and escorting soldiers, and we were all led to the gates and through a hamlet. In twenty minutes we arrived at the wharf, at which a big steamer was lying. We were ordered to load her with coal. It was hellish work, seeing that we had eaten practically nothing and hardly slept at all for three days and nights. When I had put a few sacks on board, I fell down in a faint. When I came to, I found myself lying on some coal-sacks with a young man in a leather jacket sitting by me revolver in hand.

"Well, old chap," he said, "been having forty winks? Go and keep tally of the sacks."

I was posted at the gangway and had to count the stevedores who passed me bearing sacks. At about 11 p.m., before the loading was quite finished, the former vice-governor Paul Innocentovitch Popoff fainted. He died without regaining consciousness.

Four days had passed since we left Petrograd, and six of our party were already corpses and another had been shot through the shoulder.

We returned to our hut at about midnight. We threw ourselves down on our board beds just as we were, covered with coal-dust and dirt, and fell asleep. The fleas raged furiously, and there was a pitiless draught through the chinks in the walls.

I had a gastric attack in the night, and the custodian allowed me to go to the latrine, which was on the rocks, nearly four hundred yards behind the row of huts. Prisoners are allowed to

walk about the camp only during the daylight hours; in the evening and at night they may do so only in case of necessity. The whole length of the barbed-wire fence is lighted by electric lamps and guarded by sentries. On my way to the latrine I was twice challenged by patrols, who shouted: "Halt! hands up!"

When I got back to the hut I could not go to sleep again. My internal pains, the fleas, the dirt, and my shattered nerves chased sleep away.

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We were ordered to get up at five o'clock. I washed after a fashion on the rocks behind the hut. A piercingly cold wind was blowing, the sky was grey, and the long line of huts among the rocks and marshes had a depressing aspect. At half-past five we were sent to the camp kitchen to draw boiling water and black bread. My money had been taken away from me when my belongings were examined, and I had been told that it would be placed to my current account. There was no possibility of obtaining a pass-book at present, for we were in "moral quarantine", which meant that we had not a minute to ourselves. We had hardly drunk our hot water and swallowed our black bread when all the prisoners fell in for inspection in the "main street".

All the prisoners in the camp are divided into four companies. Both company and platoon commanders are chosen from among the prisoners, in most cases the Tchekists under sentence. If a company commander is not a Tchekist, it is worse than ever, for the camp administration demands even more of him than it would of a Tchekist, and this naturally affects the mass of the prisoners.

The inspection lasts for about forty minutes, and the prisoners have to stand at attention all the time. I do not think that such military discipline as that enforced by the "Uslon" existed even in the Emperor Paul's¹ Gatchina regiments.

Directly after inspection all the prisoners were sent off to

¹ Paul I (1796-1801). The historian Rambaud says of him: "Il poussait à la manie le goût des minuties militaires."

their work. The work they have to do is of the most heterogeneous nature, for the camp supplies all its own needs. The prisoners employed in domestic labour of various kinds, in the offices, the workshops, and the electric-power station—are for the most part those who have been imprisoned for a long time and have passed through the moral quarantine stage. The duration of the quarantine period varies in the case of each prisoner—from a month to several years, according to his social origin, past career, and the nature of his “crime”. The criminals get through the quarantine stage more easily than anyone else, and the “K.R.’s” (counter-revolutionaries) and political prisoners with the greatest difficulty. There is, however, a class of political prisoners which enjoys certain privileges—those whom the Soviet authorities themselves designate as “politicals”.

This category embraces Communists who are followers of Trotsky, Left Social Democrats, and sometimes Social Revolutionaries. These receive a somewhat better ration than the others, though a miserable one at that; they are not employed on hard labour and are accommodated all together, apart from the mass of the prisoners.

Sometimes one of the prisoners succeeds in getting himself put on to comparatively light work within a short time of his arrival. This happy state, however, is always cut short in a disagreeable manner. Either the camp commandant notices the mistake, or one of the *seksoty* (secret agents) informs him that this or that prisoner has been wrongfully or prematurely given a privileged position. In such cases the unlucky individual is immediately taken off his light work and made to return to a “primitive” state.

These secret agents are a permanent scourge to the prisoners in the Solovetsky camps. There are several hundred of them. By no means all are recruited from among the ex-Tchekists; a large number of them have voluntarily become informers and *agents provocateurs* in the hope of earning their pardon and getting away from the camp—if not to freedom, at any rate to prison.

The labour in the Solovetsky camps is hard for many reasons. In the first place the working day is no less than ten hours, and there are no holidays. In reality the working day should be counted as twelve hours, for the inspections alone occupy nearly two hours every day. In the second place the majority of the prisoners are in a state of debility and suffering from scurvy as a result of the meagre and disgusting food, the utterly impossible housing conditions, and lack of clothing and footwear. Thirdly, all the tools and implements provided for the work are absolutely inadequate. Fourthly, the prisoners never receive definite instructions from anyone as to what they are to do and how they are to do it. They cannot ask, for that might be regarded as a breach of discipline. It goes without saying that no payment is given for any work; even the Tchekists receive no recompense for their services. The Tchekists, however, receive their clothing and an improved State ration, whereas all the other prisoners are obliged to feed and clothe themselves at their own expense. The prisoners cannot possibly exist on the State rations issued to them. Those prisoners who cannot spend even 15 roubles (about 30s.) a month on food die of scurvy in their first year in the Solovetsky camp.

Immediately after the morning inspection we were taken to the hospital with a party of men suffering from scurvy, invalids, and old men. The hospital was a small wooden building calculated to hold forty beds, but so overcrowded with patients that sick people were lying in the ante-room on the floor. In the hospital yard, under the shelter for the fire-hose, stood coffins containing the remains of prisoners who had been liberated for ever. There were five doctors in the hospital. The size of the medical staff convinced me that the hospitals at Kem and in the Solovky must be the best in the world. It is easily explained, however; there are a great number of doctors among the prisoners in the Solovetsky camps—so many that they discharge the functions of dressers and hospital orderlies, a more agreeable occupation than sawing planks with a blunt saw or loading coal in sacks with holes in them. The hospital is most meagrely supplied; not only are there no proper drugs,

but even the food provided is almost uneatable and lacking in nourishment.

I was examined by two doctors, the proceeding being supervised by two Tchekist dressers. My long grey beard, which covered my whole chest, and my emaciated appearance this time stood me in good stead; I left the hospital with a paper authorizing me to be put on light work. As soon as I reached our hut I was ordered to carry round wood to all the huts, a task which I fulfilled in the company of two priests. Then we carried round water to each hut, and finally swept the "main street".

At one o'clock all the prisoners returned from work and went by companies to get their dinner from the kitchen. This consisted of potato soup and rotten codfish; the smell of the decomposed fish filled the whole camp. I happened to meet an acquaintance of mine, a jeweller, with whom I had been imprisoned in Petrograd, and borrowed some food from him. Many of the prisoners had no jugs or plates or spoons. They stood at the kitchen door in crowds begging the fortunate possessors of table utensils to put their dinner on their plates for them. I hardly knew where I was before two of the cardboard platters on which dinner was served out were thrust into my hands, and I had not the heart to refuse the unfortunate people, who had not even plates. I had in my hand a small aluminium bowl which I had used for washing, as my plate had been stolen on the journey. I filled it nearly to the brim with stinking soup, to the great delight of my chance clients. One of them turned out to be a former Hungarian officer named Furreddy, who had been taken prisoner by the Russians during the war. In 1920, just as he was making his way to the Ukraine in order to get back to his country as best he could with the help of the Germans, the Bolsheviks arrested him. They first banished him to a free settlement in the Urals, but this punishment seemed to them insufficient, and in 1923 he was sent to the Solovky. His clothes were very poor and thin, though he received help in the form of money from his brother, who lived at Budapest.

At two o'clock all the prisoners were taken back to work, and I was sent with a small party of weaklings and invalids to fill up the marsh with rubble. This was very uncongenial work, being senseless and unproductive. I suggested to the overseer that we should first dig a ditch round the marsh, but the only answer I received was, "Don't criticize. Do as you're told." At seven all returned to the huts and went by companies to get supper. Each prisoner was given for supper two very large spoonfuls of buckwheat porridge with sunflower oil. At eight we all fell in again in the rain in the "main street", and there was an inspection which took nearly an hour. After the inspection an order of the special disciplinary college of the Kem clearing station for the shooting of the three men—whose bodies had been shown to us the day before—was read. When this "college" had assembled, tried the offence, pronounced sentence of death, and carried it out was beyond all comprehension. Of course this order had been written after the event; for all three men had been shot less than half an hour after Kalugin had lodged his complaint. Michelson, who was president of the college, had been in our hut for some time after the fellows had been led off, and he himself had shown us their bodies "as an example".

After the inspection we all threw ourselves on our beds and endeavoured to sleep.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Our Journey Continued—Indiscreet Talk—A Woman's Request—The Solovetsky Islands—History of the Monastery—The Horrors of Kholmogory—A Survivor's Adventures

ABOUT ONE O'CLOCK in the morning we were suddenly aroused and told to get ready to go on board a steamer which was to leave shortly for the Solovetsky Islands. We put our things together and sat on them till 4 a.m. Dawn was just breaking when we were formed up, our luggage loaded on to a cart, and we were marched out of the camp, through the hamlet and past the saw-mills, to the wharf. Our party was joined by another, consisting of the women who had travelled with us from Petrograd. On the wharf were a number of Tchekists with their wives, who had come from Petrograd and Moscow to visit their husbands for a fortnight, as they are allowed to do once a year. There were about 150 passengers, including our party. The Tchekists and their wives occupied the cabin of the steamer, and we were all placed on the fore-deck, women as well as men. Two machine-guns, ready for action, were trained on us from the bridge, and the steamer moved away from the wharf.

It is about forty miles from Kem to the main Solovetsky concentration camp; this distance, in fine weather, the dilapidated old steamer covers in five hours. The morning was extraordinarily clear, and held promise of a lovely autumn day. All the prisoners sat on their bundles and sacks, enjoying the unexpected rest. An old lady, an Austrian, was delighted to be able to talk to me in her native language, and began to question me closely about the Solovetsky camp. I knew just as much about it as she did, and, not wishing to depress her, changed the subject. This was, moreover, desirable as a measure of security, for the whole of our conversation might be overheard by one of the secret agents, who had probably already been recruited among the prisoners belonging to our party. All the ladies were much agitated because a rumour was being

spread among the prisoners that we were all to be sent to hard labour directly we arrived at the Solovky.

The conversation again began to take a dangerous turn—in the local significance of the term—and I thought it better to move away. Leaning over the bulwarks, I gazed on the silvery surface of the expanse of sea. This sea, on a clear, sunny day, fully justifies its name “White”. Far ahead could be seen the faint outlines of scattered groups of islands, to the right the vault of sky blended almost imperceptibly with the sea; to the left of our course, beyond the scarcely visible horizon, the Arctic Ocean began. The fresh sea air and the creaking of the chains of the steering-gear recalled to me my long years of service at sea, and my yearning for liberty became painfully acute.

A whisper awakened me from my reflections. A woman of middle height, with a most beautiful profile, was standing by my side, leaning on the bulwarks. Locks of grey hair escaped from the shawl that was tied round her head, but her complexion had a youthful clearness. Her refined, beautifully formed hands bore the traces of long, rough, unaccustomed labour. Nervously drumming on the oak bulwarks with her fingers and looking straight in front of her, she said to me in French, in an undertone, hardly moving her lips:

“Don’t look at me. Do you speak French?”

I replied with a slight nod. It appeared that the lady had learnt from the Austrian woman that I was a foreigner, and, like all Russians, had decided that “I should probably be sent back to my own country”. A touching and innocent belief!

Mrs. X. begged me in a rapid whisper, as soon as I was liberated, to let her husband, an engineer, who had escaped abroad and was living in Paris, know that she had been in the Butyrka prison for two years and had now been sent to the Solovetsky camp for two years. She had been arrested for corresponding with her husband and on suspicion of espionage. Of course I said nothing regarding the “probability of my speedy release” and return to my country which might disappoint the poor lady, and promised to do as she asked me. Quite contrary

to my expectations, I was liberated, though not so soon as Mrs. X. anticipated, and I did not forget her commission. Unfortunately I did not succeed in finding her husband at once, for soon after I was released I left Finland for South America. Not till my return thence was I able to go to Paris (in 1927) and, with much trouble, seek out Mr. X. He, alas! had by that time married again, "supposing" that his poor wife had died in the prison camp.

The Solovetsky group of islands lies in the White Sea, about forty miles due east of the coast town Kem. The largest island in the group is called Solovetsky, and is situated approximately in latitude 65° N. and longitude 36° E. North-east of Solovetsky are the islands of Anzor and Great and Little Muksalm; the last named is joined to Solovetsky Island by an artificial causeway. Three-quarters of a mile to the south-west of Solovetsky Island are the Zajatsky (Hare) Islands and Kond Island.

The "Solovetsky camp for special purposes" ("Slon"¹) extends over all these islands.

At the time of my stay in the camp there were about 8,500 prisoners in it. The whole of the camp administration and a large number of the prisoners are on Solovetsky Island. There is not a single free inhabitant in the whole territory occupied by the camp.

The dimensions of Solovetsky Island are $14\frac{1}{2}$ miles from north to south and $9\frac{1}{2}$ miles from east to west; its circumference is about 110 miles. The shores of the island are flat and stony, and its surface, the area of which is about 150 square miles, is hilly and in places marshy. There are as many as three hundred lakes in the island; the largest, called the White Lake, is over three miles long and five-eighths of a mile wide. Solovetsky Island is rich in meadows, and in its woods are foxes, hares, squirrels, and deer; the Metropolitan Philip

¹ The word *Slon*, formed from the initials of the Russian words corresponding to "Solovetsky camp for special purposes", is also Russian for "elephant". The play upon the words cannot, of course, be reproduced in English.

introduced deer into the island in the seventeenth century. The coast is indented; the largest bay is that of Solovetsky itself, and at its north-western corner is the monastery, now occupied by the central administration of the camps and prisoners' quarters.

The Solovetsky monastery was founded in 1429 by two monks, Hermann and Sabbatius. The building of the walls surrounding the central part of the monastery was begun in 1584; it took twelve years, and the walls are about 1,100 yards in circumference, 39 feet high, and 19 feet thick. There are eight huge towers on the walls, built in the so-called Novgorod style. In the space enclosed by these gigantic walls is the so-called Kremlin. The principal monastery buildings—the Superior's quarters, the kitchens and offices, churches, and three huge cathedrals—are here.

During its existence of nearly four hundred years the Solovetsky monastery more than once played an important part in Russian history, to which the marks of enemy shells on the mossy walls and the ancient cannon in the towers of the Kremlin bear witness to this day. When the Revolution broke out there were about 700 monks in the monastery. In addition to the brothers there were always over a thousand pilgrims in the monastery, who helped the monks to keep it going. The whole population of the island was thus a single working community on a gigantic scale, and, thanks to the untiring work of the monks, Solovetsky Island and the islands in its immediate neighbourhood were turned into a model agricultural colony.

In 1918 the Soviet power reached the Solovetsky monastery. Some of the monks were shot, some consigned to various prisons, others drafted into the Red Army. The constructive work of four centuries was annihilated in five months. By 1921 the monastery and all the islands were totally uninhabited, for the Soviet power, in the true spirit of vandalism, confined itself to pillaging the Church treasures and attached no importance to the profits to be made from the extensive fields, farms, and workshops.

In the middle of 1921 a Soviet official discovered some docu-

ments relating to the Solovetsky monastery in the archives of the former Ministry of Finance, and the Soviet authorities now found to their surprise that the monastery had not only been completely self-supporting, but had yielded a considerable income to the State treasury. This discovery gave the Tcheka the idea of turning the monastery into a concentration camp for politically unreliable elements. All the prisons and concentration camps in the interior of the country were at that time so crammed that prisoners had to be turned away.

The most terrible of all the camps, that of Kholmogory, near Archangel, in which as many as 3,000 persons were imprisoned, came to an end in 1922, in a rather unusual manner; the prisoners were gradually exterminated by epidemics and mass shootings. Only the camp administration was left, consisting of Tchekists sent there as a punishment for taking bribes. A commission sent from Moscow to investigate the affairs of the Kholmogory camp acted with the rapidity and decision characteristic of the Tcheka; it shot the whole camp staff, and by this wise act of Soviet justice the whole past, present, and future of the Kholmogory camp was obliterated.

The people in this camp lived in huts made of planks roughly put together, with no heating and hardly any food. The prisoners were harnessed to ploughs and, after ploughing, were shot where they stood. I met a survivor, I believe the sole survivor, of the Kholmogory camp in the Shpalernaja prison—Baron Grevenitz, formerly colonel of the Finland Guard Regiment. He had lain among heaps of bodies of spotted typhus victims, which had been flung into one hut; they thought he was dead and threw him into a trench. The Baron managed to crawl out of the trench, and after many truly miraculous adventures reached an old longshoreman's cottage. He gradually recovered and, after wandering about for a long time in the provinces in the interior of Russia, arrived at Petrograd when the "Nep" era had begun. He succeeded in legalizing his position and even obtaining a post in one of the Soviet offices; but he was arrested again in 1924 in connection with the "Lyceum trial" and was shot in the spring of 1925.

The Solovetsky concentration camp seemed to the Tcheka, from its island situation in the extreme north of Russia, an ideal place of imprisonment. It did not take them long to decide to transport thither a batch of prisoners 2,000 strong. The buildings, as the result of five years' neglect, had been reduced to such a condition that the prisoners were irrevocably condemned to death from hunger and cold; and in 1922 a mutiny and a fire broke out in the camp. The error was rectified in true Tchekist fashion. Two regiments were sent with a full supply of provisions; the latter, of course, for the soldiers and Tchekists. Several hundred prisoners were shot and the régime was made more severe than ever.

All the new batches of prisoners who were continually being sent to the camp were compelled to put the dilapidated monastery into order with the most primitive implements. At last Moscow realized that things could not remain as they were; the prisoners were dying by hundreds, and the productivity of the camp was not being increased. It was decided to spend money on supplying the camp with tools and repairing all its factories, workshops, and domestic offices. At that time—which coincided with my own arrival at the camp—the number of prisoners confined there had reached 8,500.

CHAPTER XXXIX

Solovetsky Monastery from the Sea—First Sight of the Prisoners—A Cathedral turned Barracks—Off to the Peat Pits—A Night of Torment—The Polluted Cathedral—Difficulties of Getting Food—Night Work Again—Bricks without Straw

DESPITE THE HORRIBLE DESOLATION of the camp, the former monastery is astonishingly beautiful, seen from the steamer's deck. Over the green fir-woods rise, scattered here and there, little white chapels with bright-green conical roofs, while to the right the golden cupolas of the Kremlin cathedrals and a few green church spires are seen. As we approached the shore the Kremlin became clearer and clearer; we could plainly see the ancient moss-grown walls with towers springing out of them at the corners. All these cupolas, shorn of their characteristic emblem, the cross, make a strange impression.

The speed of the engines was decreased; we glided slowly into the bay and approached the wharf. Right opposite the wharf rises a long, lofty white building—the former monastic hostel for a “select public”. This building is now occupied by the “Uslon”. Crowds of Tchekists in uniform caps and leather jackets were to be seen everywhere. A few Tchekists and a half-company of escort soldiers met our steamer at the wharf, while a crowd of starved-looking people in rags huddled timidly together close by. These ragged wretches were the prisoners working at the wharf. When I saw their faces I recognized a number; I had seen them a year before at exercise in the Petrograd prison, and with some I had even shared a room.

There was Commander Vonliarliarsky, once a famous dandy; there was the tall, stooping figure of Prince Golitsin, son of the former Premier who had been shot. There, coming ashore from a loaded barge, bent under the weight of a box, hardly able to walk, was the painter Professor Braz, formerly vice-president of the Imperial Academy of Art. I had been in the Shpalernaja prison with him in August 1924.

I saw many acquaintances, but, heavens! what all those men had become in one year at the Solovky! They were not men, but skeletons covered with tight-drawn flesh—ragged and dirty, most of them in plaited birch-bark shoes, bound to their feet with pieces of twine.

The Tchekists stood in large groups and surveyed us new arrivals with ironical smiles. The ladies of our party, who stood in a compact mass by the steamer's hatch, huddled nervously together, enjoyed special attention.

"Disembark! Fall in! No talking! Look alive!"

A Tchekist, who looked like a Georgian, gave these orders, gesticulating forcibly with his revolver. We fell in with our belongings in our hands and on our backs.

There was the usual rattling of rifle bolts, the escort took up their position, and we were marched off to the Kremlin, passing between a high wall, centuries old, and a deep ditch.

The ladies could not keep up.

"Hurry up, ladies!" the Georgian shouted. "There are no cars here! Are you in the family way already?"

We entered the main gates, passed under an arch, and came into a large square surrounded by buildings. My first impression was that we were in an old-clothes market on the outskirts of a large town.

We saw thousands of terrible creatures in rags, emaciated and filthy, with sores on their faces and watery eyes. Evidently the prisoners were going off to work, for while we were passing through the square crowds of people were falling in, one batch after another. Birds of a species unknown to me were walking about the square, uttering now and then a sharp, piercing cry. Oh, the squawking of those Arctic gulls! One gets accustomed to it after a time, but for the first few weeks the screaming of those birds is enough to drive one mad. The half-ruined, devastated cathedrals, the thousands of emaciated, ragged people with no light in their eyes, walking like shadows, and the sharp cries of the gulls as they stalked about freely among those tortured outcasts!

We crossed the square, went up a stone staircase of fifty

steps, and emerged into a long and fairly wide stone gallery. On the left-hand side of the gallery were the massive cathedrals and the buildings which had been the refectory, sacristy, and so on. On the right was a wall half-burned at the time of the fire, with gaps where the windows had fallen in. This gallery had formerly been closed, but the ceiling had collapsed and had been pulled down altogether. Fragments of religious frescoes were still visible here and there on the wall. The gallery was about 350 yards long and about 26 feet wide.

We were taken almost to the extreme end of the gallery and out into a large square in front of the former Rozhdestvensky¹ cathedral. An endless registration, filling up of innumerable forms, and examination of our luggage began. At about five in the afternoon all the formalities were concluded and we were taken into the cathedral.

The Rozhdestvensky cathedral easily held 1,500 worshippers. It is now turned into barracks for prisoners. To convert the cathedral into a dwelling-place all that was done was hurriedly to whitewash over all the images of the saints and all the frescoes, and place beds, consisting of unplanned boards on wooden trestles, in all the open places. The cathedral now accommodates 850 prisoners, who live in a horrible state of filth and overcrowding. Semi-darkness always prevails, as light enters only through windows cut in the vaulted roof, and there is always a mist from the prisoners' wet clothes and the general dampness.

The prisoners confined in the cathedrals form what are called experimental companies; these are the 11th, 12th, and 13th. They belong to what is called the first division of the camp. The commander of this division is a Tchekist named Nogteff, formerly a Kuban Cossack, exiled to the Solovky for ten years for drunkenness and disorderly conduct. Our 13th company was divided into platoons and sections, commanded by Tchekists.

I was put into the third platoon, which was quartered in the

¹ I.e. in commemoration of the birth of Christ. *Rozhdestvo* means "birth" in general and also Christmas.

room on the right-hand side of the now vanished altar. The roof was so high that it disappeared in the mist of human exhalations. The space we occupied had formerly been an integral part of the altar, and had been separated from the rest of the cathedral by the rood-screen. Now the rood-screen had been removed, and in its place a partition of boards had been put up, which separated us both from the altar and from the rest of the cathedral. The third platoon's quarters were about 30 yards long and 20 yards wide. Beds made of unplanned boards ran along the walls at a height of some 4 feet 6 inches from the floor. Our quarters were regarded among the prisoners as "privileged", for there was not a single criminal in our platoon. There was no furniture but the beds; this, however, was not required, as we only slept in these quarters and were at work all the rest of the day.

We had hardly thrown our belongings down on the beds when we were chased out on to the square in front of the cathedral. We were formed up, and our platoon commander announced that we were to be sent to work immediately at the peat pits, three miles from the Kremlin. The adjutant appeared immediately afterwards with four Tchekists and counted us off; then, under the command of the Tchekists, we moved off, hungry, tired, and shivering with cold. Many of us had eaten nothing for over twenty-four hours, but to mention the fact was out of the question.

On leaving the Kremlin we went along a broad forest track; then we crossed several vegetable gardens, and at last came to a wooden hut close to the peat pits. We were ordered, in view of the rapid approach of winter, to take up the whole of the railway track laid down across the peat bog, and to stack up the rails, and also the iron trollies, by the watchman's hut. Each section of the portable railway track weighed about 350 lb., and there were 175 sections. Each trolley weighed about 440 lb., and there were twenty-three. Our party consisted of forty-five men, including several old men and invalids.

As the marsh was intersected by a number of ditches and clumps of bushes, the first thing to be done was to lay down

duck-boards at various points, so that we did not begin the real work until eight o'clock. The cold iron rails cut our hands and made them bleed. In places we had to walk over heavy, marshy ground, and the distance we had to cover was nearly three-quarters of a mile. We were ordered to get the work done as quickly as possible, and were promised the long-desired rest and sleep when it was completed.

Walking three by three across the bog, carrying in our hands a section of railway track weighing 350 lb., was unbearable torment. If one of the carriers stumbled, the other two immediately stumbled as well, and dropped the rail on the ground. Our hands refused service, for the cold iron cut our palms. Towards ten o'clock three old men collapsed altogether. One of them, an old soldier named Kolokoltsoff, lay down on the ground and said:

"I'd rather you killed me. I've no strength left."

The Tchekist Sartis, a Lett, lifted Kolokoltsoff up and placed him on his feet with the words:

"Don't play the fool. The others are working; you work, too. You've plenty of time to die."

The trollies gave just as much trouble. Grass and undergrowth wound themselves round their wheels, and they sank into the loose soil.

It was nearly two in the morning when we finished this hellish work, completely worn out, and flung ourselves on the cold earth where we stood. We felt that we could not move another step. Then Sartis took out his watch and said:

"You can have a breather now, and then you must take all the stuff you've brought to the station and load up the trucks about six o'clock. The trucks'll be there at that time."

The station of the narrow-gauge railway was nearly three-quarters of a mile from the watchman's hut. The moon rose, and the men, crushed beneath a burden of toil far exceeding human strength, looked like ghosts in the pallid moonlight. About four in the morning Kolokoltsoff died of heart failure. When the trucks had been loaded up, and Sartis ordered us to get into a truck, one of us asked him:

"But what shall we do with Kolokoltsoff's body? Shan't we take him into camp?"

Sartis walked straight up to the inquirer, thrust his revolver into his face, and said:

"Do you see that? I'll teach you to interfere in what doesn't concern you! Stop your talk!"

When we reached the harbour we had to unload the rails and trollies from the trucks and stack them all neatly close to one of the sheds. We reached our quarters in the cathedral about nine in the morning and fell on our board beds like dead men. No wonder; we had not eaten or slept for nearly thirty-six hours, and we had hardly eaten or slept since the day we left Petrograd. We had learnt by experience that night what the Solovetsky concentration camp was like.

I was forcibly awakened, with difficulty, at about three o'clock. The cathedral was quite empty, for all the men were at work except our party, who had been given a rest because we had been working at night. We were ordered to sweep out the cathedral. We were given skinny, worn-out brooms, broken wooden shovels, and two sackfuls of shavings.

The cathedral, with its endless rows of dirty board beds, on which heaps of rags of all kinds were thrown, made a deplorable impression. The stone flags were covered with a thick coating of dirt, and under the beds were heaps of decaying rubbish, shavings, and droppings of food. All this stuff was in a state of decomposition and emitted a revolting stench. It was impossible to take the rubbish away, for there was nowhere to put it. The cathedral door opened on to the broad square, which had to be kept clean, because the camp commandant and his staff sometimes passed through it. The nearest place where the rubbish could have been shot was about a mile from the cathedral—the ruins of a small church. Prisoners of the 11th, 12th, and 13th companies were allowed to wash in the morning at these ruins, for there was no washing apparatus whatever in the cathedrals. The removal of all the rubbish

from the cathedral would have been a full day's work for several dozen men.

The camp administration had, therefore, limited itself to one simple hygienic measure. On the south wall of the cathedral was an inscription in enormous letters: "Without education and cleanliness there is no road to Socialism." On the north wall another no less edifying inscription struck the eye: "Work strengthens a man's soul and body." Right over the altar, where the image of Christ had once been, there was now Lenin's portrait with these words in ancient Slav letters below it: "We are showing mankind a new road. Labour will be the master of the world." The day before we arrived at the Solovetsky camp the corpse of a prisoner who had died of exhaustion was found, stiff and stark, under the board beds in our cathedral.

Towards six in the evening platoon after platoon of prisoners returning from work began to enter the cathedral. We swiftly brushed all the dirt we had swept into heaps under the beds and went to our own quarters. These were somewhat cleaner, for we had surreptitiously stuffed all the dirt into a sack and shaken it out of the window straight into the ditch.

Supper was brought in two wooden tubs; it consisted of thick buckwheat porridge cooked in sunflower oil. Each of us received several spoonfuls of the porridge. To get boiling water we had ourselves to go to the kitchen, which supplied the needs of nearly 5,000 persons. To reach the kitchen we had to walk the whole length of the stone gallery, go out into the square, cross over to its left-hand side, and wait our turn for about half an hour. When we had received our boiling water and got back to our quarters, each of us had to wait till a space on the board beds was free, for the whole place was overcrowded and there was nowhere to stand one's teapot. All this had to be done every day, after a whole day spent in exhausting labour and an almost sleepless night.

The whole business of meals was unappetizing in the extreme, as the majority of the prisoners had not washed for weeks. There was no time to wash; to do so one had to go to the well in the square, draw water to fill a teapot, and then go to the ruins at

the risk of breaking one's neck. It can be imagined, too, what washing in the open air, in a piercing cold wind, was like. Many ate with their fingers because they had no spoons. Food bought at the co-operative store usually lay at the head of the beds among rags, wet shoes, and dirty tools. The state of filth, misery, hunger, and cold in which the prisoners in the Solovetsky camp live is indescribable.

Directly after supper we were all paraded again for evening inspection. This takes place at the same time in all the divisions of the camp, so that it lasts an hour and a half. All this time the prisoners are formed up in several ranks, exactly covered off and absolutely motionless. At every evening inspection an order is read giving the names of the persons shot during the day. There were always a few persons shot every day when I was at the camp, and sometimes more than ten.

After evening inspection the parties whose turn it was to do nightwork were given their orders. Our party was ordered to fish logs out of a lake. As long as it was light this work could be done after a fashion, but when darkness came on it was not work at all, but veritable hell. Stout logs, sometimes 45 feet long, were floating on the water; these had to be drawn ashore and carried over the rocks and through the bushes to the saw-mills. There was a time-limit; so many men had to deliver a certain quantity of logs to the saw-mills by a certain time. We were given neither boat-hooks nor ropes, nor any kind of gear to assist us in the work. The prisoners had to wade into the water neck-deep—September, it may be remarked, is late autumn in the Solovky—and push the slippery logs ashore with their hands. What torture it was, two of us dragging a wet, slippery log, stumbling over mounds of earth and stones and entangling ourselves in the brushwood! Everyone had to work conscientiously, or else the other members of the party would have raised protests. The work had to be completed by a definite time without fail, and if there were the slightest delay, not only the whole party of workers, but the Tchekest supervising the work, would be held responsible. Death alone could release a prisoner from his work.

The youngest and strongest of our party went into the water and began to pass on the logs to those of us who had remained on shore. When I had done three journeys to the saw-mill and back my strength gave way completely, and, despite the protests and murmurs of my comrades, I lay down on the bank, determined to die rather than continue to undergo a torture which would never stop whether one worked or not. Yesterday it had been the rails, to-day it was the logs, to-morrow it would be something else. No rest, no sleep, no food, no warmth, nor the least hope of an improvement in our lot. Then a thought flashed through my mind: "Hold out to the last, hold out till you fall down insensible. It is a disgrace for you, an old officer, to give in." I got up and went into the water to work; if I was condemned to die, I had best die in my native element.

We returned to the cathedral at midnight, wet to the skin. The whole vast building was faintly illuminated by a few small lamps, and after the fresh air the stench in the place was nauseating. The bodies of the sleepers—850 of them—lay packed close together. In our quarters the air was slightly better than elsewhere, but we were even more cramped for space than the rest. I wedged myself in between two sleepers with a great effort, but we were so crowded that I could only lie on one shoulder. Every cloud has its silver lining, however; the stuffiness made it warm, which just suited me, for like many others I was lying quite naked. All my clothes were wringing wet, and I had hung them up in our quarters to dry.

CHAPTER XL

*Meetings with Old Friends—The Camp Co-operative Store—
Certain Death for Prisoners without Means—Specialists' Advan-
tages—A Régime of Uncertainty—The Siekirnaja Hill—Scheme
for Revival of Shipping—A Pleasant Post—Archbishop Robs
Vegetable Gardens*

SEVERAL DAYS PASSED. Another contingent of prisoners had already arrived from Kem, and we had become assimilated with the mass of the prisoners. At six every morning I went off to some kind of hard labour, different each day, and returned to the cathedral at midday. When I had swallowed my fish soup or buckwheat gruel I went off again to my appointed task, and returned at six in the evening. Then came the so-called supper, followed by the inspection. At about ten o'clock we were all shut into the cathedral; we lay down half-dead with weariness, and went to sleep packed tightly together. In these first few days at the Solovky I finally lost all resemblance to a human being; I do not think an individual of more dubious appearance than that which I had acquired at this period could be found in the vilest doss-house of any great European city.

It was not surprising, for from the moment I left Petrograd I had seldom had a chance of washing my hands and face in the open air. I had no underclothing or linen, but two pairs of socks, a nightshirt, and three handkerchiefs. My suit had been torn in the course of my hard, rough work, and the insects devoured me at night. But my neighbours were in an even worse plight than I. It was growing colder every day, and two primitive tile stoves were set up in the middle of the cathedral. A stove of the same kind was placed in our quarters, and some of the prisoners used to cook codfish and potatoes at it; the fumes and smoke which arose in consequence were very painful to the eyes.

At the work of various kinds to which I was sent I had the pleasure of meeting many of my old friends who had been in prison with me in Petrograd. Some of them had already passed through the "moral quarantine" stage and were spending

their second year in the Solovky. Some of them, especially those who were engineers and doctors, had even been fortunate enough to make their position comparatively endurable; they had obtained work corresponding to their special qualifications. The 10th company, 600 strong, was formed of specialists; it was quartered in a special building on the main square. This building had formerly been occupied by monks, and the prisoners were installed in their cells.

My old friends gave me assistance mainly in the shape of food, for my money had not yet been paid into the camp funds, and I was therefore starving. Food and even clothes can be bought at the camp co-operative store, or at its branch in the Kremlin, on the main square. This branch is situated in a kiosk built of portions of the old rood-screen. The salesmen in these stores are, of course, prisoners. Both branches have a fairly large turnover, as besides the prisoners there are two regiments on the island for guard duties. The prices in the stores are incredibly high, and the goods provided do not meet the purchasers' requirements.

Despite their imposing title, "co-operative stores", these establishments bear no resemblance to co-operatives as the word is understood in the rest of Europe. They are co-operatives of the type found all over Soviet Russia—an ordinary State organization, whose revenue goes to the source which provides the working capital. The whole of the profits of the camp co-operative stores go into the Tcheka treasury. The men of the regiments stationed in the camp, and the Tchekists, accordingly obtain goods from the stores at much lower prices than the prisoners; moreover, at the time of which I write, wine, pastry, preserves, ham, jam, and similar luxuries were always in stock, but bread, bacon, and other absolutely necessary articles of food which the prisoners could afford to buy were frequently not to be had at all. Roughly speaking, when I was in the camp, more than half the prisoners—that is, about 4,000 persons—not only had no money at all, but lacked even the most indispensable articles of clothing.

The majority of these prisoners die in their second year in

the camp from chills, scurvy, nervous disorders, or Tchekist bullets—for the poor creatures, maddened by hunger and torment, and reduced to a state of utter desperation, often indulge in futile demonstrations of protest. These unfortunate people are for the most part peasants, workmen, and ordinary criminals, who have no source from which they can obtain help. The prisoners belonging to the educated class, some two or three thousand strong, are able to endure their captivity rather longer, as their relations and friends send them ten or fifteen painfully acquired roubles every month. It is possible to exist in the camp on this sum in a state of chronic hunger, buying only such things as bacon, herrings, potatoes, bread, onions, and sometimes sugar and tea. About a thousand prisoners get quite as much as they require; these are “Nepmen” of all kinds, sent to the camp for speculation, dealings in contraband, bribery, and various offences of a service nature. They are able to spend, on an average, fifty roubles a month, or more than that sum. The senior Tchekist prisoners are very well off. Although officially they receive no pay they are allowed a “special ration” and clothing, and are lodged in special quarters which are quite comfortable.

Strange as it may seem, the representatives of the working and peasant class are worse off than anyone else in the Solovky, and the mortality among them is considerably higher than among the other categories of prisoners. The educated men suffer unbearable torture during the first two or three months of “moral quarantine”. The invalids and old men usually die before the expiration of this period. Those who survive the hellish “quarantine” are, one after another, put on to work for which they have special qualifications, and are even appointed to important posts on the technical and domestic side. This does not, of course, improve their material position, but it frees them from hard labour and, most important of all, enables them to live in the cells formerly inhabited by the monks instead of in the cathedrals. This means a great deal. One can sleep on a separate bed, wash under cover, and sometimes warm oneself at a stove.

It is, quite naturally, every prisoner's dream to get out of the "quarantine" hell as quickly as possible, and be put into one of the specialist companies. Sometimes, thanks to old prison acquaintances, his own astuteness, or sheer luck, a man succeeds in finding his way into a special company before the proper time, and even being appointed to some responsible post. But this always ends in disaster. The secret agents are not dozing, the camp is seething with informers, and one fine day the "specialist" is removed from his position and transferred to one of the cathedral companies without a word of explanation. Here he has to begin all over again.

The most terrible feature of life in the Solovetsky camp is that no prisoner ever knows what the next minute has in store for him. Nothing is fixed and definite. No one knows exactly what is allowed and what is not. For example, a party of prisoners is taken out to make a road. Two picks to break stones with and one shovel are served out for the use of the whole party, twenty men strong. How are they to proceed? It is impossible to ask that a sufficient quantity of tools shall be served out to the party, for that would be a breach of discipline; possibly, too, the tools have not been given on purpose, in order to make the work harder. But it may turn out to be otherwise. One of the camp commandant's staff may pass and notice that the prisoners are carrying stones in their two hands. Then the whole party is charged with sabotage. The slightest comment results in disciplinary measures being taken against the offender.

The lightest punishment is thirty days' imprisonment in a dark dungeon, from which the prisoner has to emerge daily for exceptionally severe labour. If anyone receives disciplinary punishment twice in the course of three months, he is transferred to a special division of the camp on the Siekirnaja Hill. On this hill is a church, now converted into barracks for prisoners. It is approached by a staircase of 247 steps, which have to be descended and ascended four times a day, for all the work is done down below, at the foot of the hill. Everything required for the domestic needs of the barracks—water, wood, and provisions—has to be carried up these steps. It is seldom that

anyone returns from the Siekirnaja Hill, and if a prisoner does return his term of detention in the camp is lengthened—for the administrative college of the camp has the right to pronounce sentences, including the death penalty, independently of Moscow, and it makes the fullest possible use of this right.

I once saw a party of prisoners from the Siekirnaja Hill being taken to work in the cemetery for victims of scurvy and typhus. This cemetery infects the whole air, for an underground stream washes away the holes in which the dead prisoners are placed. I say "holes" and not graves, for the prisoners are buried in holes, like homeless dogs. We were made aware of the approach of the prisoners from the Siekirnaja Hill by the loud order, "Out of the way!" Needless to say, we all dashed to the side of the road, and a gang of emaciated, utterly brutalized men went by, surrounded by a large escort. Some of them wore sacks for want of clothing; I did not see a single man wearing boots.

It is very dangerous to be appointed to any responsible post, especially on the economic side, in the store or in the numerous workshops which manufacture footwear and clothing for the free population of the mainland and for the army. There are periodical scandals in all these establishments—peculation, fraud, waste. The abuses are always investigated by a local commission, and it goes without saying that non-Tchekist prisoners are punished with the utmost severity. There is no means of guarding oneself against unpleasant consequences of this kind, for a prisoner, whatever post he occupies, has no rights at all, but only duties. The commandant's assistants are also prisoners of the most varied description; ordinary criminals are not infrequently found in their ranks.

I met in the camp some of my old brother-officers in the Russian Imperial Fleet. About this time the camp commandant had the idea of reviving the fleet which had formerly belonged to the Solovetsky monastery, consisting of a number of fairly large sailing-vessels. His intention was to reorganize the fishing industry and the transport of timber products to the mainland. Some of my old brother-officers were called upon to assist in

this task. The camp commandant and his colleagues, who understood nothing whatever about shipping and expected that the scheme would result in large profits for the camp, i.e. the Tcheka, obtained the indispensable credits from Moscow, and an enterprise on typical Soviet lines came into being. There was a great deal of "swank", a multitude of fantastic paper schemes, insignificant resources, and complete ignorance in "high places". A large number of specialists were needed for the reorganized business, and there were not more than fifteen real sailors with scientific training in the whole camp.

My friends, therefore, decided to call upon my services, and to get me out of the "cathedral" on this plausible pretext. The idea of being transferred to the 10th company for quarters and working on my familiar special subject had great attractions for me, but nevertheless I hesitated. The camp commandant might realize at any moment that I was a "K.R." and a "Sh.P." ¹ and had only been in moral quarantine for a few days, and might send me back to the 13th company in disgrace. Guided by these considerations, I replied to my friends' kind proposals with a decided negative, nor do I regret having done so. In a few days' time there was a reshuffle in the navigation and fisheries section, and half my friends were sent straight from their draughtsmen's tables to the quarries on Kond Island. It was said that one of the secret agents had informed the camp commandant that the sailors were planning an escape.

Just then, by pure chance, I was appointed watchman in one of the vegetable gardens which served the needs of the two regiments stationed in the Solovetsky camps. I liked this occupation very much, and I decided that at all costs I must obtain secure tenure of this peaceful post. I was on night duty, my colleagues being the old Archbishop Peter and the writer Igor Ilinsky. Another vegetable garden quite close by was in charge of young Prince V., who had been in the Corps des Pages with my brothers, Professor Verbitsky, of the Theological Academy, and Kniazeff, formerly vice-governor of Tamboff.

¹ I.e. a person charged with counter-revolutionary activities and with espionage.

I discharged the honourable function of watchman in the Soviet vegetable gardens for several nights, and I am bound to say that it is the most pleasant recollection of my whole sojourn, not in prison only, but in Soviet Russia.

The quiet moonlit nights of autumn had set in, and from the watchmen's hut, which stood on an eminence, we could see an endless vista of vegetable gardens, silvered by the moon. A thick wood stood like a dark wall round the gardens. In the hut one could light a fire and cook potatoes and turnips in a kettle; these we, the watchmen, stole from the gardens—including the Archbishop. We took it in turn to make the round of the area entrusted to us, but in reality there was no one to protect the gardens against, for they were four and a half miles from the Kremlin, and prisoners did not move about on the island by night except on their way to nightwork, when they were always accompanied by Tchekists.

The Archbishop was a very intelligent man of wide culture, with an inexhaustible fund of humour and good-nature. He had been transported on suspicion of harbouring counter-revolutionary designs. The rest of my colleagues had been sent to the camp on more or less the same grounds. Young Prince V. had already been in the Butyrka prison for three years. He was a fascinating young man, a dreamer and a poet. A strange impression would have been made on a casual observer by our heterogeneous group round the fire in the hut, as we listened to young V. declaiming his sonnets to the moonbeams in a sing-song voice.

We all returned to the Kremlin at six in the morning and were told off to our respective companies. The huts were almost depopulated, and we could sleep on our beds in peace until twelve o'clock. At two o'clock all the watchmen who had been on night duty were taken to sweep the square. This was not hard work, and as a multitude of prisoners, both men and women, passed through the square, I met a great number of people whom I had known, not only in my former prison, but in Petrograd society before the Revolution. About this time I received some clothing, linen, and money which the Consulate

had sent me. This was most agreeable, for it proved that the Consulate had not lost track of me. It became colder and colder every day; the gulls flew away southward, and the birds which still wandered about the square had not succeeded in growing wings with which to take flight. . . .

The thought of spending the winter in the Solovky horrified me. To be cut off from the outside world for nearly seven months! Nearly six months of Arctic night in the power of degenerates and executioners!

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CHAPTER XLI

I Become Store Watchman—Mexican Consul-General's Story—How Well-to-do Prisoners Live—The Camp News Centre—Why I Stopped Feeding Gulls—My Ambition Realized—A Tchekist's Drunken Freak

MY DUTIES AS WATCHMAN in the vegetable gardens came to an end in the second half of September, and I awaited my next appointment with great uneasiness. One day, when passing the kiosk in the square, I perceived behind the counter the long-nosed physiognomy of a Hebrew jeweller of my acquaintance who had been in the Shpalernaja prison with me. His name was Kümmelmacher. He had undergone great hardships in prison, as he had been arrested at the theatre and taken straight to gaol. He was in a common room with me for three months without receiving any help whatever from outside; his shop and flat had been sealed up and his family arrested. I sometimes gave the unfortunate, terrified Kümmelmacher food and even bought him cigarettes. Why he had been put in prison, and why transported, I do not know to this day, for I never had patience to listen to the whole of the Jew's story; he was loquacious in the extreme and always began the tale of his misfortunes from the year 1899.

On seeing me Kümmelmacher was filled with an indescribable joy, possibly out of place but perfectly genuine. He evidently felt entirely at home behind his counter. I asked him jokingly if he did not want a watchman for the kiosk and, to my great surprise, received the delighted reply:

"Certainly I want one. And an educated, high-principled man like you, Boris Leonidovitch, would be the most suitable person for the job."

At two o'clock the same day I entered on my new duties. My predecessor, the Mexican Consul-General in Egypt, Señor Violara, had received promotion; he had been appointed milkman and had his quarters quite close to the kiosk. The employees of that shop were a curious collection. The manager

of the co-operative store, Barkan, had formerly been the *doyen* of the brokers on the Petrograd Bourse, and, as it happened, had executed commissions for me before the Revolution. The jeweller Kümmelmacher was his assistant. The book-keeper of the kiosk was a priest, a doctor of theology named Lozina-Lozinsky. The Mexican Consul-General in Egypt, Violara, sold milk. A former gentleman-in-waiting, named Elagin, and I were watchmen.

The story of the Mexican Violara was most interesting and unusual. He was married to a Russian lady, and his wife also was a prisoner in the women's division of the camp. Until 1924 they had lived in Alexandria, where Violara had a big business and was Mexican Consul-General in Egypt. Rumours of "Nep" reached Señora Violara's ears, and she decided that the political situation in Russia had improved and that she could go there to see her aged mother, who lived at Tiflis. She had no difficulty in persuading her husband, and in the spring of 1924 they arrived at Tiflis. Having seen her mother, Señora Violara wanted to have a look at Petrograd and Moscow. Husband and wife were arrested by agents of the Tcheka in the Hôtel de l'Europe in Petrograd, sent to the Butyrka prison in Moscow, and charged with espionage and counter-revolution—the grounds for this accusation consisting in the fact that Señora Violara's brother had been an officer in Denikin's army. After six months' detention in the Butyrka prison they were sent to the Solovetsky camp for three years.

When I first met Violara he had been in the camp for nearly a year. Notwithstanding the enormous amount of money he spent in the camp his position was most deplorable; for being hardly able to speak a word of Russian he often found himself in the most dangerous situations. Of his wife he could obtain only fleeting glimpses when she passed through the square with a group of other women employed in the mill and the bakery.

Señor Violara's brother, who lived at Alexandria, had transferred a very large sum to the Consul-General's current account, which enabled husband and wife to spend as much as £60 a

month. For this sum they could supply themselves with tolerable food, buy themselves clothes of poor quality, but clean and warm, and supplement the rations of some of their fellow-prisoners. This enabled them to secure help in the hard labour they had to do—for, of course, neither Violara nor his wife received any privileges; he was not transferred to the 10th company, and his wife removed from the peat pits to the mill, until several months had elapsed.

The room which Violara shared with four other prisoners reminded one of a provision store. Knowing by experience that in winter nothing could be obtained in the shop at any price, the prudent Mexican had filled the whole room with food for himself, his wife, and his comrades. Like the other prisoners whose wives were undergoing punishment in the camp, Violara was never allowed an interview with his wife, and it was painful to see the poor fellow, affectionate and emotional by nature, sitting for hours close to the kiosk with a milk-pail, looking expectantly towards the corner of the square where the party of women must appear on their return from work in the mill. On these occasions the tender-hearted Kümmelmacher would wipe a tear from his long nose and say, with a jerk of his head in the Mexican's direction:

"Well, I'd like to know what good it does them to make a man suffer. Why can't we see our children? What good does it do them, the swine?"

Some time after Kümmelmacher received an answer to his question, for "they", our torturers, had ears everywhere.

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The work of watchman at the shop was not hard, and in the conditions of the Solovetsky camp was a pleasant occupation. In the first place it was the humblest duty a man could undertake, so that I was in no danger from any kind of intrigues. In the second place I had no assistants, which meant that no one could cause me unpleasantness.

I went on duty at 6 a.m. and remained at my post until 12 p.m. Kammerherr Elagin relieved me at midday, and was on

duty till 6 p.m. I went on duty again at 6 p.m.; at eight o'clock a sentry was placed on guard over the shop and I went back to my company. The shop was a scene of activity all day long: it was, indeed, a kind of club, where all the news was discussed. Kümmelmacher was a past-master of the art of news-gathering. As soon as Tchekist purchasers came up to the counter he began to pump them cunningly, and we were always *au courant* of the various changes in the administration, new orders, the arrival of all kinds of commissions from the capital, and so on—matters which play a part of the first importance in a prisoner's monotonous life.

One day we heard this story. The camp commandant's adjutant, a Moscow Tchekist named Vaskoff, had fallen passionately in love with one of the women prisoners, Tomilina by name, whose husband was also a prisoner in the camp. She and her husband had been sent to the camp for a year, and their term expired in September. They would, therefore, have to be sent to the Kem clearing station on the mainland, whence they would be released. Tomilin had been on hard labour the whole time, and his wife was Vaskoff's secretary. One day Tomilin was put on to hard labour which he was unable to do; he was, therefore, removed to the Siekirnaja Hill, which meant that his period of detention in the camp was prolonged. Tomilina was now a free woman in every respect and became Vaskoff's legal wife.

When I had heard a whole string of stories of this kind, in which shootings alternated with denunciations, I lost all desire to listen to the conversation of those who visited the shop. I found myself another occupation. In the intervals of sweeping the space round the kiosk, forming up the queue of purchasers and putting potatoes in sacks (all these things formed part of my duties), I sat down on a box and threw scraps of bread to the young gulls just preparing to fly away. But this harmless occupation, too, became repugnant to me after a certain incident.

One day Elagin was late in relieving me. I shut the shop, sat down on my box, and began munching bread and ham, throwing scraps to the birds as I did so. They caught the

scraps on the wing very cleverly and amusingly, and even tried to snatch the bread from my hands. I was aroused from my occupation by two terribly exhausted men in rags; they had, it appeared, tried to speak to me several times, but owing to my deafness and absence of mind I had paid no attention to them. One of them, a young fellow, said to me:

"Throw us a few scraps instead. We'll catch them on the wing just as well as the birds."

His words cut me like a blow from a whip. Unfortunately the shop was shut, and I had nothing in my hands but an absurdly tiny piece of bread. Seeing my confusion, the other man, the older of the two, said:

"Perhaps you'll give us a few potatoes out of that sack, citizen?"

I gave them some potatoes, and they began to devour them raw with avidity.

After that I gave up feeding the birds.

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Towards the end of September the priest Lozina-Lozinsky was removed from his duties as kiosk book-keeper without any explanation and ordered to clean out the lavatories of the administration. Twenty-four hours later the talkative Kümmlmacher was removed and sent to the saw-mills. An extraordinarily repellent Pole, formerly a bank director, was appointed in his place. To avoid disagreeable incidents I began to seek for ways of escape from my present occupation to some new, inconspicuous post suited to me and involving no responsibility.

Right opposite our kiosk were the quarters of the 10th company, the object of my secret and passionate longings, but, alas! inaccessible to me as a "K.R." and "Sh.P." When the prisoners went out to work every day and passed across the square not far from our kiosk I noticed a tall, imposing figure in a semi-military uniform of the pre-Revolution style. It was Colonel P., late commanding officer of one of the smartest Guard regiments and a brother-officer of my uncle who had been shot at Kholmogory. I had often met Colonel P. at

Tsarskoe Selo before the Revolution, and I therefore waited for a convenient moment to go up to him and introduce myself. The excellent colonel was already an old inhabitant of the camp, and had attained the high rank of junior adjutant to the commander of the 10th company. The company commander was a Kuban Cossack, a splendid fellow, who had been sentenced to ten years for banditism and armed robbery of Soviet railway trains.

The colonel promised to try to get me a post as messenger in the company orderly-room, but there was not much hope of this, as I already had a "post", and my "chief", the Pole, might not release me. Luckily Violara, who had been giving the Pole food for a long time, came to my assistance, and I finally entered the orderly-room of the 10th company as a messenger. This was the summit of my desires, as I had money and clothes, but not health, and could no longer live in the nightmare surroundings of the 13th company. I might get myself into the invalid section, but the idea was repugnant to me, as it contained men who were really ill, and the prevailing atmosphere was that of a hospital, and a dirty Soviet hospital at that.

On the very last night of my stay in the cathedral a curious incident took place. We were suddenly aroused at about three in the morning and formed up in several ranks inside the huge cathedral. Nobody knew what was happening, and the prisoners, as usual, anticipated that they were to be taken out and shot down with machine-guns. I say "as usual" because, as a result of the continual mass shootings, the first thing the prisoners saw in every unexpected disposition was the prospect of being shot.

The matter, however, proved to be a much simpler one. Our divisional commander, Nogteff, a Tchekist and a Kuban Cossack, had got very drunk in the course of an inspection of the women's hut, and to freshen himself up had ordered a horse to be brought; he then rode up the forty-seven steps leading to the stone gallery and began to make the round of the companies under his charge. On entering our cathedral he reined in his horse with a violent tug at its mouth, stopped in front of us, and called out cheerfully:

"Good morning, boys! How are you *bourgeois* gentlemen?"

In a few minutes, however, Nogteff began to feel unwell; he got off his horse and flung the reins to two warders who had hurried up. I was standing next to a little old priest, who kept muttering to himself all the time. Thinking that the priest was ill, I asked him:

"Are you ill, little father? What's the matter with you?"

The priest took me by the elbow with an agitated gesture, and said, pointing to the ground with his finger:

"My God, my God, we are trampling the place of the holy altar under our feet, and what words we are hearing! A drunken madman on horseback in the holy temple!"

We were, in fact, standing right in the middle of the site of the altar, and the priest was horrified, for the Orthodox regard the spot where the Table stands as peculiarly sacred and only a priest may stand on it.

Nogteff tried to make us a speech, but he broke off and ordered us to dismiss. How they got him and his horse away I do not know.

CHAPTER XLII

A Deceptive Idyll—Sinecure for Caucasians—10th Company's Quarters—Food Prices—Messing Arrangements—Two Camp Theatres—Professor Braz, "Court Painter"—Bogus Hospital Photograph—Byrsan and His Wife—An Interesting Afghan

I WENT TO THE 10TH COMPANY the first thing in the morning with all my possessions. As I was covered with vermin from head to foot and my things were swarming with them, I was sent to the baths, which are outside the Kremlin. I handed over all my things to two prisoners who were acting as corridor warders—one of them a former employee of the Okhrana, the other an ex-sergeant of gendarmes. In return for three pounds of sugar, five packets of coarse tobacco, and two cakes of soap they promised to clean and shake out all my things, and to sprinkle them carefully with turpentine, for which I would pay. I felt immediately that I was at last in civilized surroundings—for how long?

All the prisoners, except those in the dungeons and on the Siekirnaja Hill, can walk about the island quite freely, but it is advisable to obtain a pass from the warder on duty each time one leaves the Kremlin. Needless to say, no one goes about the island except on duty; for in the first place all the prisoners are continually occupied, and in the second place it would be very dangerous to wander about the island simply for the pleasure of a walk, for there are patrols and promenading Tchekists everywhere. I was stopped and questioned three times on my way to the baths. The sun was shining brightly, but the sharp, cold wind and the slightly frozen road indicated the approach of winter. I met prisoners, singly and in groups, engaged in various tasks. Smoke was pouring from the chimneys of the factories and workshops. The narrow-gauge railway train crept snake-like from the edge of the forest.

As I went along I tried to imagine what impression the whole picture would make on a casual observer ignorant of the hidden side of Solovetsky camp-life. It was a peaceful, well-

nigh idyllic picture of a working community. It seemed to me that the Soviet authorities could with perfect safety invite any foreign delegation to make a superficial inspection of the Solovetsky camp. The delegation could not, of course, be allowed to enter the Kremlin—in particular, the stone gallery leading to the cathedrals. And Heaven forbid that its members should come into contact with the prisoners, for one sight of them would suffice to destroy the whole illusion. But the authorities could display, for purposes of show, Tchékists in prisoners' clothes; they, too, are counted as prisoners, and there are several hundreds of them. Besides these, the "political" prisoners could be shown—that is, those whom the Soviet authorities count as "politicals"—Left "S.R.s"¹ and Left Mensheviks. Their conditions of life are not bad.

Just to the left of the road, before I reached the baths, I saw a huge board affixed to two posts and bearing the words "Disinfecting Chamber". The notice-board had suffered somewhat from the ravages of time and weather, but it could be renovated. The fact that behind it are a piece of waste ground and some ruins is of no importance—what is important is the fact that the will to erect a disinfecting chamber exists. The notice-board testifies to this, and what more is necessary? A year before that board had completely satisfied a commission which arrived from Moscow, and several joyful articles on the model sanitary conditions prevailing in the Solovetsky camp had appeared in the *Pravda* and *Izvestija*.

In the baths, which were incredibly dirty and in a state of dilapidation, a regular "mountain republic" had been established, for the place was managed by a number of Caucasians under sentence for banditism and robbery. The prisoners employed in separate establishments, factories, and so on outside the Kremlin live at the place where they work. They are all old inhabitants of the camp, for the most part important criminals, for the Soviet authorities are favourably disposed towards prisoners of this type, and the camp administration treats them with confidence and even sympathy.

¹ Social Revolutionaries.

The bath-house could not accommodate more than fifty persons at a time, but there were fifteen sturdy attendants, Georgians and Abkhasians, who lived in the bath-house itself and the adjacent building. What they did there I could not understand. I received the impression that the whole establishment existed for their benefit, for I saw hardly any prisoners going to the baths. The prisoners have no time for bathing, and, moreover, the baths are quite inadequate for 8,500 persons. Certainly some 700 Tchekists must be deducted from this figure, but they have an excellent bath-house in the Kremlin. On my promising to order bacon, sugar, tea, and tobacco from the store, an Oriental washed my underclothing, trousers, and jacket in the bath itself, and dried them on a boiler in the furnace-room. At last I was clean and dressed in clean clothes; they were full of wrinkles from the vigorous drying they had undergone, but such trifles were of no account.

The 10th company is quartered on the two upper floors of the building where the monks lived in days gone by. On the first floor are various Kremlin offices and the dispensary. The quarters of the company consist of a large number of small rooms, formerly cells, ranged along both sides of a long corridor. The company orderly-room is in one of the cells; in it live the company commander, his adjutant, the clerk, and one of the corridor warders. The room is about twelve yards square, and, of course, I could not be quartered there. The other rooms were all overcrowded at the moment, so I established myself at the end of the corridor on a *toptchan*—two wooden trestles with a board placed on them. I was quite satisfied with this arrangement; in comparison with my life in the cathedral, sleeping on a *toptchan* was the height of luxury. Through the corridor warder, an ex-sergeant of gendarmes, I obtained two sacks of shavings, out of which he made a mattress for me; some of my things I stowed away in Violara's room and some in the room of a Roumanian officer named Byrsan, with whom I had been in prison in Petrograd.

The quarters of the company were deserted in the daytime, as all except the warders had gone off to work. The régime and

general arrangements were rather different from those prevailing in the moral quarantine companies, as the members of the 10th company were for the most part employed in the camp offices, the accountants' department, the technical office, the hospital, the chemist's shop, and so on.

We were aroused at 6 a.m. by the ringing of a bell and the sounding of a trumpet, and after inspection and cleaning up we went off at 8 a.m. to the various camp organizations in which we were employed. We all returned at one o'clock and set about preparing dinner. At three o'clock everyone went off to work again, returning at six. More cooking followed, then came evening inspection, and the working day was over. This was the daily routine, on holidays as on other days. The working day was in practice considerably more than twelve hours, for a great deal of time was consumed by inspections, washing clothes, cleaning up, and getting and cooking food.

Almost all the prisoners in the 10th company were in receipt of the "fortnightly dry ration". I must explain what this was. The dinner and supper issued from the camp kitchen were so disgusting, and the kitchen was in such a horrible state of filth, that it was better to go without a portion of cooked food and receive an entire ration of uncooked food from the provision store once a fortnight. The camp administration willingly allowed the special companies to do this, for their meal-times did not coincide with those of the other companies, and the issue of a fortnightly ration considerably lightened the work of the kitchen, which had to feed 5,000 people twice a day. Fortnightly rations were drawn by prisoners living and working in remote corners of Solovetsky Island, on Muksalm, and on Kond Island.

A person who was not fastidious and in thoroughly good health could exist—without ever satisfying his hunger—on this fortnightly ration for ten days, but not for longer. The ration consisted of salt codfish, buckwheat groats, dried greens (600 grammes for the fortnight), salt, sunflower oil (half a litre), moist sugar (150 grammes), potatoes, and 500 grammes of black bread daily.¹

¹ A kilogramme (1,000 grammes) = 2 205 lb., and a litre = 1·76 pints.

Those who receive a hot dinner direct from the camp kitchen fare even worse as regards nourishment, for the food is stolen by prisoners employed in the kitchen. The majority of the prisoners in the special companies receive help in the form of food and money once a month from their friends and relations. This arrives regularly so long as communication with the mainland is possible—that is, for five months in the year. When winter arrives, food can be obtained only at the co-operative store, but the victuals sold there are all very dear, and are not always to be had at all. I give the prices charged for various articles of food at the time of my stay in the camp:

1 kilo grey bread	..	..	..	..	..	1s.
1 kilo cow's butter, salted and melted	..	..	..	..	..	5s. 7d.
1 kilo salt bacon	..	..	..	..	..	4s.
1 glass milk (from the monastery farm, now revived)	5	1	d.			
1 250-gr. tin potted meat	..	..	..	..	..	1s. 7d.
1 kilo moist sugar	..	..	..	..	..	2s.

Even if a prisoner is able to obtain food this does not by any means settle the question of nourishment. No prisoner has more than a very limited amount of time at his disposal. The quarters of the 10th company contained only three small stoves which stood in the corridor, and the cooking of food at these stoves was officially not allowed. Needless to say, everyone did use the stoves for cooking, at the risk of incurring the commandant's wrath and being sent to the Siekirnaja Hill. As soon, therefore, as the word went round that one of the higher camp officials was in the Kremlin, all cooking stopped. But, we asked ourselves, where else were we to cook? If we were allowed to draw a "dry ration" once a fortnight it followed that we must be allowed to cook these rations somewhere. But none of the prisoners knew where, and no one dared to raise the question for fear of being sent back to the cathedral.

The prisoners belonging to the special companies are divided for messing purposes into groups of several men inhabiting the same cell. If it happens that the majority of the men in one cell are not receiving financial help from outside, those who are in receipt of such help join some other group more or less on

an economic level with themselves. In such cases the greatest care is necessary, for there may be a secret agent among your cell companions, who, from envy or annoyance at being unable to feed himself at the expense of his more well-to-do comrades, may inform the commandant of "the formation of a dangerous clique". Then, good-bye to the 10th company! Back you go to the primitive condition of "moral quarantine"!

In the intervals of work the corridors are full of noise and bustle. There are endless queues at the stoves; the noise of quarrelling and the smoke from cooked fish and bacon fill the air. Very well-to-do prisoners, who are able to feed and even clothe several of their comrades, have a rather more comfortable time, for one of these friends always manages to get a place at the stove and cook his patron's modest dinner. Here, too, however, there is a "but". In feeding a fellow-prisoner the utmost caution must be observed, lest such an action should have the appearance of a payment for services received; otherwise the camp administration will detect "*bourgeois proclivities*" in the giver of bounty and transfer him to the cathedral for a long period as incorrigible.

In the Solovetsky camp, therefore, everyone is always fussing about and trying to look busy even out of working hours, for a prisoner, under the existing régime, may not have a minute to himself. If a prisoner has any free time, it means that something is wrong, that someone has been bribed; and the consequence is that he is transferred to hard labour and sent to live in one of the cathedrals.

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My new duties consisted in delivering messages from the company orderly-room to various offices in the camp, sweeping and cleaning the corridor, fetching letters for prisoners in the 10th company from the offices in the Kremlin, and copying their parts for the actors of the camp theatre. This last duty was a complete surprise to me, but I naturally made no protest, for it gave me a legitimate excuse for going to the theatre at ten o'clock in the morning and being present at rehearsals.

There are two theatres in the Solovetsky camp—one for the criminal element and the other for the *intelligentsia*. At both theatres only plays of a Communist tendency are performed.

The actors are exempt from hard labour and enjoy certain insignificant privileges. But they, and in particular the actresses, must have their own costumes, and, as they are always busy rehearsing, they always have to feed one of their fellow-prisoners in order to get their dinner cooked. The company of the theatre for the *intelligentsia* is, therefore, supplemented largely with speculators, Tchekists, *demi-mondaines*—in short, with those elements which in Soviet Russia enjoy relative prosperity. There are eternal feuds among the “artistes”, and it not infrequently happens that the hero or heroine of to-day is sent to the brickworks or the furnace-room to-morrow. In the Solovetsky camp everything is unstable and subject to change.

I succeeded in solving the food question in a very satisfactory manner by joining forces with four very pleasant men—the painter Braz, the Roumanian officer Byrsan, an Afghan engineer named Said Sultan Kabir Shah, and Weiner, formerly head of one of the departments of the Imperial Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Braz had been in the Solovetsky camp for over a year, and had already been in one of the special companies, in which he had been engaged in architectural work. Two months before I met him he had been denounced by a secret agent and had been transferred to hard labour at the harbour. Braz had been put into the 10th company not long before, and he was now, as Byrsan wittily expressed it, “Court painter”. Every day the distinguished old professor of the Imperial Academy of Arts was sent off to sketch different views of the Solovetsky camp.

This work would have fully satisfied the professor if it had not been for the position of “Court painter”, which the proud and sensitive artist found painful in the extreme. He had been ordered by the camp administration to draw scenes from the life of the prisoners and sketch the interiors of the historic churches of the ancient monastery. Everything he drew was subjected to censorship by the administration, and the old

professor was obliged to draw "Potemkin villages"¹ in his sketch-book at the instructions of Vaskoff, Nogteff, and similar individuals. Every time he returned from an inspection of his work by the censorship he set himself, with a bitter sigh, to restore (in his sketches) the dilapidated churches and beautify the ugliness of camp-life. These drawings were intended for a Soviet publication which was to reflect, in pictures and drawings, the heavenly existence led by prisoners in the gaols and camps of the U.S.S.R.

There was also a "Court photographer" at the Solovky. He, however, was a Tchekist, and I was once a witness of the following scene:

I had been sent to the hospital with letters and papers. The hospital is situated in a two-storied building not far from the entrance gate of the Kremlin; this building was formerly the monastery hospital and was then in a model condition. Only a few sorry traces of the past remained, and that thanks entirely to the utterly selfless labour of the imprisoned doctors and Sisters who carried on the work of the hospital. I could not bear to enter this establishment, for the patients lay in the very passages, on the floor, and diffused an insufferable stench.

On the day in question I noticed with astonishment, as I approached the hospital, that little tables, neatly covered with white cloths, were arranged in the barren little garden in front of the building; on these tables stood cups and bottles, and at them sat "patients", well dressed in a kind of uniform. It was horribly cold, and the men seated at the tables must have been frozen in their thin suits. But healthy people are not afraid of cold. The fact was that among the patients who sat there posing there was not in reality one sick person. They were "supers" chosen from among the Tchekists and arranged thus in order to be photographed. My most unimpressive aspect, in a battered hat, short fur coat, and felt boots, must have spoilt the idyllic charm of this picture of happy patients reposing

¹ The elaborately staged sham villages which Catherine II's minister Potemkin had erected for the purpose of deceiving the Empress, on her journeys, as to the population and prosperity of the country have become proverbial in Russia.

in the spring (or summer?) sunshine. One of the *regisseurs* shouted at me twice:

"You there, with the beard! Go to the devil! Clear out!"

I ask the reader's pardon for this digression and return to my interrupted account of our life in the cells of the 10th company.

Braz had been sent to the Solovky on suspicion of espionage, because he had been the guest of the German Consul-General in Petrograd. The unfortunate painter had had no communication with his family for eighteen months, and just on the eve of his departure he received a letter from his old maid-servant telling him that his family were living in Germany in great poverty and that both his sons had died in Berlin.

The Roumanian officer Byrsan was a capital fellow, a trifle rough, but very good-hearted and agreeable. He had been arrested at Odessa, whither he had gone in a perfectly normal manner to see his relations. He had fallen in love with a Russian girl there and wished to marry her. Not long before the time fixed for the marriage the Odessa Tcheka arrested his *fiancée* and proposed to the unfortunate girl that she should give information about the condition of the Roumanian army as the price of her liberty. She, of course, in her ignorance, consented, supposing that her consent would not bind her to do anything. But the matter was by no means as simple as the girl thought. When Byrsan had got married and was preparing to leave the country, he received permission to go, but his wife was refused permission "without explanation of the reasons". Only then did it occur to the young wife to tell her husband all that had happened at the Tcheka headquarters.

As the Tcheka had a paper signed by his wife in which she agreed to become a spy, Byrsan, not wishing to compromise her in his own country, thought it best to drop the matter officially, and attempted to escape from Russia without a visa. He was arrested with his wife on the Roumanian frontier, and they were both sent to the Solovky for ten years on a charge of espionage. Mrs. Byrsan's relations sent her a small sum of money every month; on this money she and her husband led a life of perpetual hunger. Byrsan and his wife were unable to

communicate details of their arrest to their relations; they did not even know whether the Roumanian Government knew what had happened to them.

Arcady Petrovitch Weiner had been involved in the ridiculous "Lyceum trial"; he bore his hard lot with rare courage, dignity, and manly vigour.

The most interesting of all my mess-mates was the Afghan engineer, Said Sultan Kabir Shah. He was an honorary and hereditary *mullah* of Afghanistan. He had been seized and arrested by Afghan Bolsheviks one night in the Pamir, whither he had gone on business from his native town, Peshawar. He was bound, transported from place to place by night, and finally handed over to the Russian frontier officials. Kabir Shah was lodged in a number of provincial prisons *en route*, and at last, after the most incredible and ghastly sufferings, reached the Tcheka prison in Moscow, the Lubianka; thence he was sent to the Solovetsky camp. No one in Afghanistan knew anything of Kabir Shah's fate; he therefore received no material help from any source and suffered terrible privations. Some of the prisoners helped him with money, food, and clothes, but the proud, sensitive, cautious Afghan would not accept help from the first person who offered it.

Kabir Shah had studied at the English school of engineering in Calcutta and spoke English admirably. His English leanings and his popularity among his fellow-countrymen were the causes which led to his being kidnapped by the Afghan agents of the Soviet power and handed over to the Soviet authorities.

His Russian was a horrible lingo; he used expressions more suited to the boatswain of a sailing-ship than to an ecclesiastic. This was not surprising, seeing that he had picked up Russian in prison, mainly from criminals.

His English was faultless; his choice of words and expressions was admirable, and it gave me great pleasure to talk to him. He was a man of wide culture, with well-defined views and the fresh, clear intelligence characteristic of men of a primitive race who have received a European education. We were sometimes joined by a Hindoo named Koreisha, who was in another

company. He was serving a term of imprisonment for espionage; but I never found out why he had come to Russia, the circumstances of his arrest, or any other details of his life.

Kabir Shah was a very handsome man, strongly built, with a fine figure; he was thirty-four, but looked younger. He carried out all the prescribed rites of the Mohammedan religion, concerning which he was extremely particular, in the cell without the slightest embarrassment, paying no regard to our presence.

I remember a time when the issue of sunflower oil was stopped, and the only kind of fat to be obtained even at the shop was bacon. We fried potatoes and codfish with the bacon and thus obtained some kind of a meal. Kabir Shah, who always avoided having recourse to help from others, suffered very much from his inability to get any fat; he had nothing to eat but black bread and buckwheat porridge.

No persuasions could induce him to swallow a morsel of the bacon, which his religion forbade him to touch. His answer was always the same:

"My name is Said Sultan Kabir Shah, which signifies that I am a descendant of the Prophet. If I, a descendant of the Prophet, break the law, how can ordinary Mohammedans be expected to keep it?"

Of an evening, after inspection, we sometimes passed an hour in friendly conversation, and I took advantage of my hosts' kind permission to wash in a large copper basin, which had stood in the cell in the old monastic days.

CHAPTER XLIII

Fantastic Official Projects—An “Anti-Religious Saturday”—Back to My Old Company—Priests’ Dignity and Courage—Departure from Solovetsky Island—Released Prisoners’ Usual Fate—In Hospital at Kem—A Cheerful Journey—“Reformatory No. 2”

THE LONGER ONE LIVES there, the more profoundly one realizes that the Solovetsky camp is a huge madhouse.

In the technical bureau on the architectural side, where Byrsan worked with twenty other draughtsmen, a whole series of fantastic schemes were being elaborated—the electrification of all the Solovetsky Islands, a model mechanical laundry, shipbuilding yards, an astronomical observatory, and an experimental zoological station with an aquarium. Professor Braz was designing the façade of a house in which the Water Transport Board was to have its offices. Señor Violara was negotiating with the camp administration for the construction of a biological station at his own expense. The Mexican anticipated that he would be able to get himself made director of the station and settle down there with his wife.

The roof of the latrine in the central square of the Kremlin had fallen in. The prisoners inhabiting the Kremlin, about 5,000 in number, satisfied the demands of nature in every corner of the latrine, and of an evening it was by no means safe walking, as some of the seats had collapsed and left a pestilent yawning hole to mark the site.

Men exhausted from starvation and toil often fell down in a faint on the square and in the stone gallery, and a list of persons shot was always read at the evening inspection.

One of the two camp theatres was, and no doubt still is, in the Kremlin; the other outside the Kremlin near the brick-works. At this theatre plays were acted and films shown. The price of admission was from 2½d. to 10d. The actors were former professional artistes and members of the *intelligentsia*. Not long before I was there a commission, sent specially for the

purpose, returned from Moscow with wind and string instruments for the orchestra.

Prince Maksutoff, with whom I had been in prison in Petrograd, had discharged the duties of usher at the theatre in the Kremlin, but had been sent to the quarries on Kond Island for not calling "order" quickly enough when the camp commandant and his staff entered.

"Anti-religious Saturdays" were held in the theatre. These performances took place when the day's work was over, and each company was taken to them in turn. Some semi-illiterate lecturer with "the gift of the gab", a Tchekist or Communist prisoner, delivered a lecture on some anti-religious theme. I was present on only one of these Saturdays, but that was quite enough to give me a clear idea of the cultural and educational work which the camp administration was doing.

The theme of the lecture was: "What is god" (so written, with a small letter) "and of what use is religion?" Before an audience composed almost entirely of University men, and containing many priests, the lecturer repeated the cant phrases of Soviet propaganda about the deception of the people, the poisonous fruit of religion, the dishonesty of the clergy, and so on. It was very amusing when the lecturer, clearing his throat vigorously, remarked:

"Perhaps you don't know, citizens, what Darwin's theory is; I will explain it to you briefly in a moment."

And so he went on and on.

Kabir Shah nearly got into serious trouble at that lecture; he was, indeed, saved only by a fortunate combination of circumstances. He was sitting between Baron B. and myself. On my right, snoring peacefully, sat Violara, who understood no Russian beyond the most everyday phrases.

The lecturer, having exhausted his whole store of eloquence on the subject of religion in general and of Darwin, proceeded to demonstrate that God does not exist. This pseudo-scientific address would probably have ended as peacefully as addresses of the kind generally do if it had not been for the excitable Kabir Shah, who was listening most attentively, and either

shifting about uneasily on his seat or asking Baron B. and myself to translate into English phrases which he could not understand.

I noticed that Baron B.—a very nice fellow, but extremely thoughtless—several times, by way of a joke, intentionally distorted the sense of the lecturer's remarks in translating them for Kabir Shah's benefit, with the result that the Afghan became very excited and angry. The lecturer's words, "And so the whole idea of God is sheer rubbish and nonsense," he translated to the Afghan thus: "He is abusing God and saying that only fools believe in Him."

Kabir Shah lost all self-control. He leapt from his seat with convulsed features and blazing eyes, shouting, "Dog, pig, fool!" Baron B. and I, by a tremendous effort, made the infuriated Afghan sit down, and at the same moment the electric light in the theatre went out. There were shouts, hisses, and calls for matches, while Kabir Shah continued to exclaim angrily, mixing Russian oaths with English phrases: "Fool, pig, what did he mean by insulting God?"

We pacified Kabir Shah by our united efforts, and at his insistent demand I vowed to translate into Russian a paper he was going to write in defence of God, to be given to the lecturer and to the camp commandant.

Torches were brought, the disturbance and noise gradually died down; we made our way to the exit as best we could, entered the dark gallery, and splashed our way home to our companies through the puddles.

An unpleasant surprise awaited me at my quarters. It was a note from the camp administration which said curtly, without a word of explanation:

"The Finnish citizen Boris Leonidovitch Cederholm, prisoner in the 10th company of the U.S.L.O.N., is transferred to his former company, the 13th."

What sooner or later was bound to happen had happened! This was on October 3, 1925.

I left all my things in Violara's and Byrsan's rooms, and went off to the Rozhdestvensky cathedral with my rug and pillow.

In the cathedral everything was unchanged. Possibly things were even worse than before, for a large number of new prisoners had arrived, and men were sleeping on the board beds on heaps of decaying refuse.

As an "old inhabitant" and former prisoner in the 13th company I was again quartered in the room on the right of the altar; I lay on the boards between a Polish engineer named Vryblevsky, who had only one arm, and Maksimoff, a former official of the Tsarist Okhrana. They were both employed in the brickworks and had not washed for three months, and I leave the reader to imagine what sort of a night I spent, with these poor wretches close on each side of me.

In the morning I was sent to the harbour to help unload a steamer which had arrived from Kem with parcels for the prisoners. Some barges were being loaded with bricks at the same spot. I met there Mrs. B., one of the ladies who had been in the cell next mine in prison at Petrograd, and also the lady whose acquaintance I had made on board the steamer coming from Kem. They both presented a most deplorable appearance. I learned from them that the young girl called Katia, who had travelled with us, had committed suicide the day before.

I used to meet, in the square and at the theatre, a number of women prisoners who were extremely smartly dressed and even used Coty perfumes. These were the wives of "Nepmen", who had been transported to the camp with their husbands, or actresses, or well-known Moscow and Petrograd *demi-mondaines*. All these ladies had been given secretarial posts in various camp offices, or enrolled in the camp theatrical companies. Some of them bore imposing names and titles.

The imprisoned priests bear themselves with the greatest dignity. They carry out all the tasks they are compelled to execute without a murmur and with great courage, and, when the period of moral quarantine is over, take posts as book-keepers, clerks, librarians, and so on. They all go about in clerical garb, receive the benediction when they meet ecclesiastics of

the higher ranks, kiss three times on meeting—in a word, they do not deviate by one tittle from the ancient traditions of their order.

Cases of death from starvation or scurvy are hardly ever noted among the priests, for many of them receive numerous parcels of food from friends and relations.

A church service is permitted to be held on Saturdays in an old church close to the cemetery, outside the Kremlin—provided, of course, that no working time is lost. Despite their weariness, the priests go to this church every Saturday after eight o'clock in the evening; that is to say, after their work is over. Mass is never celebrated, as there are no festivals in the Solovky and everyone is busy from five in the morning till eight in the evening.

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The steamer from which I was unloading parcels was called the *Gleb Boky*, and the mate was a prisoner, Victor Bittner, a great friend of mine, with whom I had been in the Shpalernaja prison. Before he was imprisoned Bittner had been captain of a Soviet steamer running between Petrograd and England. The first officer of this ship had been a former officer of the Imperial Fleet named Kalakutsky, who had become a secret agent of the Tcheka. He denounced Bittner, who was charged with nourishing counter-revolutionary designs and sent to the Solovetsky camp, while Kalakutsky was appointed captain of the steamer.

Bittner had still to serve two years of his sentence, and his family, whom he had left in Petrograd without any means of living, could not help him at all. The poor fellow was, therefore, entirely dependent on the State ration, like the captain and the whole crew of the steamer. Yet I sincerely envied those sailors of the Solovetsky camp, who were able to do the work to which they were accustomed, to live on board ship the whole navigation season, and to come into only slight and occasional contact with all the cruelty, criminality, and treachery of camp life.

We unloaded the parcels; we had to clean up, as the steamer

was leaving for Kem again in an hour, and then we were turned on to unloading barges. As I was lifting a sack of buckwheat on to my shoulders I heard a Tchekist calling my name. I responded, and was told to go to the warder on duty in the Kremlin as quickly as possible. Unexpected summonses of the kind boded no good, and it was with a heavy heart that I hastened to the Kremlin.

The warder told me to collect my things immediately and run to the steamer, which was to leave for Kem at any moment. With a violently beating heart, fearing to put trust in my newly awakened hopes of liberation, I collected my things, which were scattered about in different parts of the Kremlin, and dashed off to the steamer, escorted by a Tchekist.

The stern mooring-rope was being cast off as I leapt on to the deck.

I still see the picture of the receding wharf, with its groups of ragged, emaciated men and its insolent Tchekists in their long cavalry overcoats, and in the background the long, three-storied building with a huge red flag on the roof and the inscription "U.S.L.O.N." On the edge of the wharf Comrade Vaskoff was visible, his arm laid tenderly about his young wife, clad in a sealskin cloak.

Farewell, Solovky, island of tears, of torment, of the Red nightmare! May you be accursed for ages to come! Farewell, ancient Russian temples, thus defiled! Farewell, dear suffering friends and fellow-captives! Will many of you be alive next year, and is any one of you destined to taste freedom again?

It was calm, clear autumn weather. Our wake lay astern of us, and the Solovetsky Islands gradually receded into the distance. There were not more than ten passengers besides myself—all, of course, prisoners. Two Tchekists in leather jackets, evidently sent to the Kem camp on duty, rapidly and unceremoniously took possession of the first officer's little cabin, under the bridge. Through the half-open door I could see a pretty young woman, laughing shrilly and trying to escape from the cabin.

Two old Kuban Cossacks were seated on their sacks aft. Beside me, on the engine-room hatch, sat an old man with a tired, intelligent face. Despite the dirty, tattered short fur coat he was wearing, and his hands, coarsened by hard labour, one could see at a glance that he was a cultured man of the world. He proved to be Sh., the former head of the Customs office at —. He had been condemned for counter-revolutionary activity and had been in the camp for two years; he had now been transferred to the Kem camp for duty in the book-keeping department of the Kem camp saw-mills. The rest of the passengers were peasants who had been sent to the mainland to fell timber.

When I told Sh. that I was being sent to Kem and was to be sent on from there to Petrograd, he sincerely congratulated me. "I congratulate you only because you are a foreigner," he added. "Otherwise I should not have congratulated you."

I was much astonished at this remark, but soon understood what he meant. People are truly released from the Solovetsky concentration camp and from Kem only by death. Whenever a person succeeds in serving his full term (which scarcely ever happens, for some pretext for prolonging the sentence can always be found) he is sent to the clearing prison in Petrograd. Thence all those released from the Solovky are sent to the so-called free settlement in the Narym region of Siberia. The Narym region is very thinly populated, and all those "administratively" exiled, arriving there without money or clothes, and with their health shattered by the Solovetsky hell, are doomed to death. They are conveyed to Siberia in carriages like that in which we had been brought to Kem, but the journey is still more terrible and involves still greater hardships, for it takes several weeks and there are constant halts, during which the prisoners are unloaded and thrown into local prisons.

Like all Russians whom I met in prison, Mr. Sh. attached an exaggerated importance to my foreign citizenship. In his opinion I could now consider myself perfectly safe, for it was evident that I was being sent out of the country. This was by no means "evident" to me, but nevertheless, in the depths of

my heart, I hoped that my lot was changing for something better and happier.

We arrived at Kem before evening. An armed escort was waiting for us on the wharf, and we were all, including the Tchekists and their merry companion, taken along the now familiar road to the clearing station. There I was told that I was to be sent to Petrograd with the next transport and placed at the disposal of the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. The transport was to leave on October 12th, till when I should have to live in the clearing camp. Now that the vision of liberty was taking shape more and more clearly before my eyes, I was ready to live not merely in the clearing camp, but with the devil himself. What could astonish or frighten me now, after all I had been through?

I met in the camp some of my fellow-travellers on the journey from Petrograd. How swiftly prison ages people! You do not see someone for three or four weeks, and the first time you meet him you notice at once the deepening of the lines on his face, the greyness of his beard, the change in the expression of his eyes.

I was given quarters in a half-empty hut, which seemed to me the height of comfort after Solovetsky life. Everything in this world is relative!

I noticed that my custodians had begun to treat me much better than before, and at evening inspection a Tchekist came up to me and said:

"You've been put on light work, citizen. You'll stack timber to-morrow morning."

True consideration, indeed!

I stacked timber daily for three days; on the fourth I caught a chill, and my temperature rose to 102°. To my great surprise I was taken to hospital. The hospital was a wretched place, and if I had not been feverish I would have preferred to lie in bed in the hut. The beds, on wooden trestles, were packed close together, and the stench from the scurvy patients was nauseating. But it was warm in hospital and there were no fleas, which swarmed in the hut.

I spent nearly a week in hospital, and every day one or two dead men were taken away. Most of the patients were consumptives in the last stage and victims of scurvy. I met there my travelling companion, the American engineer Chevalier; he had had his arm amputated, for gangrene had developed in it as the result of the wound in his shoulder. Chevalier looked very ill, and I did not think he would live to see his release.

On October 12th I was discharged from hospital, told to collect my things, and taken to the commandant's office. Some twenty prisoners of both sexes, who were being sent to the clearing prison in Petrograd, were assembled there. Seventeen of them were "political" offenders—young students, men and girls, who had served two years' imprisonment in the Solovky and were now being sent to the Narym region for three years.

To my great delight I met Igor Vladimirovitch Ilinsky, with whom I had guarded the vegetable gardens in the Solovky. His sentence of three years in the Solovetsky camp had been changed to five years' imprisonment in Moscow. He was in the seventh heaven, and told me that he had been granted this "clemency" through the assistance of certain prominent Communists who had formerly been his comrades in one of the Socialist parties. If I had been in his place—that is, a Soviet citizen—I should have been no less delighted than he was, for five years in prison in Moscow or Petrograd are without doubt infinitely preferable to three years in the Solovetsky camp.

The men and girl students travelled in different compartments of a nearly empty prison carriage. Ilinsky, a sergeant in the Polish Army named Schuttenbach, and I were placed in one compartment, where we arranged ourselves most comfortably.

Schuttenbach had been caught on the Polish Soviet frontier while making the round of the Polish frontier posts. Luckily for him the Polish Government got on the track of the vanished sergeant, and now he was being taken back to Moscow, to be sent to Poland in exchange for some Soviet spies detained in Polish prisons.

All my fellow-travellers were in an irrepressibly cheerful mood, although none of them could dream of liberation except

Schuttenbach and, perhaps, myself. The young people were going to a remote place of exile, and Ilinsky to prison for five years. But the mere fact that the Solovky and Kem had been left behind, and that something better and not worse lay before them, was sufficient cause for cheerfulness. Nothing could be worse than what they had been through already.

The men students were in the compartment on our right and the girl students on our left. They sang and declaimed verses all the way. Ilinsky told the most side-splitting stories, and made me laugh till I felt quite ill. The escorting soldiers were this time very good-natured fellows, and we bought food, and even wine, at the stations through them.

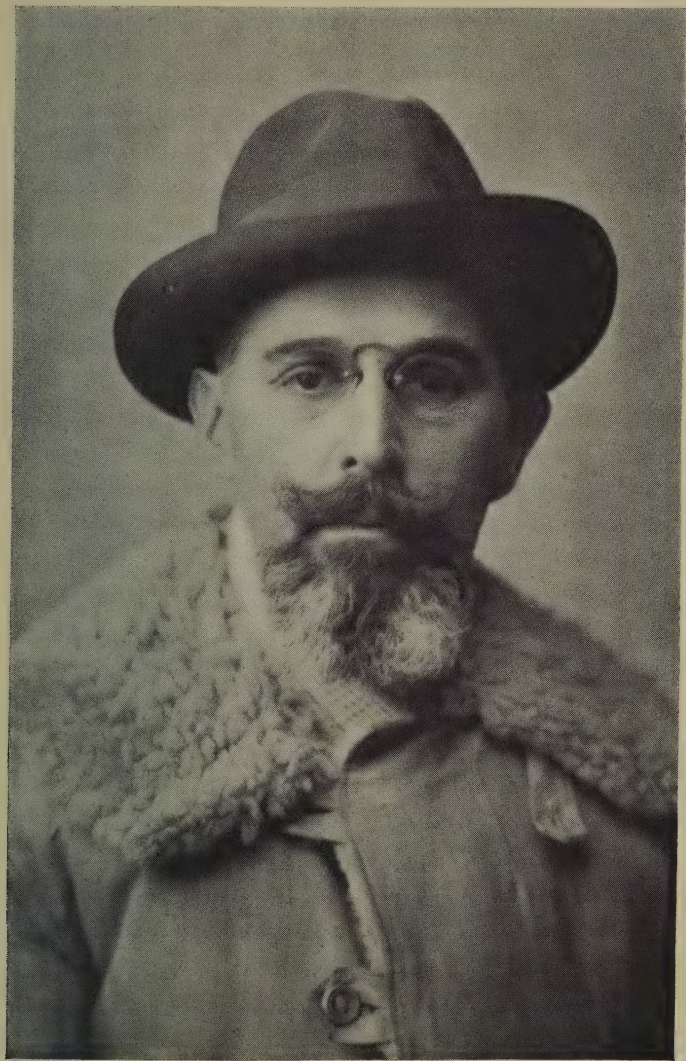
At Lodeinoje Polje station a number of Karelian peasants, arrested on suspicion of organizing a counter-revolutionary plot, were put into the carriage. Most of them were very old men of quite primitive appearance. I presented one of them with a shirt and a pair of felt boots, and he embarrassed me horribly by going down on his knees and trying to kiss my hand.

The last day we were fearfully crowded and it was very stuffy, but we were all still in high spirits, except, of course, the old Karelians.

We arrived in Petrograd on October 16th, in the daytime, and were taken to the clearing prison under escort. This prison, formerly "Reformatory No. 2", is a huge building calculated to hold 3,000 prisoners, but when we arrived there were 4,560 persons there. This figure is absolutely exact, for when our names were being entered in the reception book in the office I myself saw a report from the prison kitchen hanging on the wall. "Reformatory No. 2" is one of the prisons under the supervision of the *Narkomjust*, and those confined in it are mainly people sentenced by the courts for various offences.

Two rooms, each holding sixty persons, are reserved for prisoners passing through. The state of things in these rooms may be imagined. In the room in which Ilinsky, Schuttenbach, and I and some of the students were placed there were already 140 men, the overwhelming majority ordinary criminals.

But what could shock us, who had been in the Solovky?



THE AUTHOR ON ARRIVAL IN FINLAND AFTER HIS RELEASE

We felt, as Ilinsky expressed it, "at home with mother". The impression of a cheery family party was heightened by the presence of some children of from eight to twelve. These child criminals are a regular feature of Soviet Russian life, and are much more dangerous than adult criminals. We were robbed during our first hour in the room, I of my teapot and Ilinsky of his extra pair of boots. It would have been a naïve and absurd proceeding to report the disappearance of the things, for boots and teapot had long ago been passed through the barred door to a warder who was in league with the thieves.

Herein was the radical difference between this prison on the one hand and the Tcheka prisons and the Solovky on the other. There an iron discipline prevails and the staff is astonishingly well drilled. Here, in "Reformatory No. 2", we were a regular family party. The warder traded in vodka; one could send him into the city with a note for a rouble and buy a gramme of cocaine for five roubles.

I had got to know all this *milieu* in the Haas prison hospital, and in the evening I obtained a bed, a bottle of turpentine, and a packet of insect powder for Ilinsky and myself. It is everywhere a good thing to know rules and customs.

The older criminals treated us with the greatest courtesy and consideration; the fact that we came from the Solovky surrounded us with a halo of glory in their eyes. I discovered a most interesting fact which I did not know before, namely, that the older criminals at night bind all the child criminals hand and foot, which guarantees the safety of other people's belongings and enables the owners to sleep peacefully. A very clever idea! But how strange to observe all these characteristics in the overcrowded prisons of the world's most Socialist State in the eighth year after the Revolution!

CHAPTER XLIV

The Shpalernaja Once More—Work in the Library—Denounced by a Spy—Release from Prison—My Welcome at the Consulate—Home to Finland

THE DAY AFTER our arrival at the clearing prison all the students, Ilinsky, and Schuttenbach were sent off with a Moscow transport. In the evening I was summoned downstairs for an interview, and a woman employee of our Consulate told me that I had been brought back to Petrograd because the Finnish Government had at last secured my liberation, which would take place in the near future. I returned to my room full of joy.

Two days later I was transferred to the Shpalernaja prison. For the third time I entered the gates of this familiar prison. I went through the usual reception formalities; everywhere I noted the external smartness, cleanliness, and sham propriety of the Tcheka.

I was placed in the so-called library-room. The prisoners lodged in this room are employed in the library, which is in the same corridor; there were thirty of us in all, without exception members of the *intelligentsia*.

We were let out of our room the first thing in the morning and shut into the library, where we arranged in piles books destined for all the rooms in the prison; these books were then fetched by warders from the different sections. As there were a number of architects and engineers among us, my comrades, when not engaged in issuing books, spent their time in the library drawing various placards for street demonstrations. The subjects of the drawings and the captions were sent from the office.

Those placards got me into trouble. As I cannot draw, and the copying of the foolish catchwords was intensely repugnant to me, I began to put the foreign section of the library into order. One day a fellow-worker, an engineer named Z., asked me rather maliciously why I was not doing any placards. I

replied that I did not want to be like a dog which carried in its mouth the whip with which its master was going to beat it. There was no one in the library but the prisoners, and yet that same evening I was transferred to another room, No. 21. Through my thoughtless behaviour I had lost a number of privileges accorded to a "working room"—an hour's exercise in the courtyard, an hour's interview with friends, and the free choice of books from the library. But who could have supposed that there would have been spies among that picked set of intellectuals?

The prisoners in No. 21 were a mixed lot, for the most part men of my own type. On the following Thursday, as usual, a number of people were taken away to be shot, including five from our room—three ex-officers and two Jewish coiners. Seven employees in one of the State co-operatives replaced them. There were about forty of us in the room. The time passed rather monotonously, as I was not summoned to be examined, nor to be sent anywhere else. I had to be patient and wait till all the formalities connected with my release were concluded, when I should be sent to Finland. Thus November passed. My friends, at their interviews with me, always encouraged me, and promised that I should be released soon. My total inactivity, and the sight of the torments suffered by those around me, became insupportable.

At half-past ten on the night of December 24th I was suddenly summoned to the office, and told that I was being released and handed over to the Finnish Consulate-General in Petrograd.

.

There is really nothing more to tell.

It was a calm, frosty night—a real Christmas night. A ragged old cabman with a small, weary-looking horse had halted near the prison gate. I got into the sleigh, and noticing that the driver looked hard at me, said with a laugh:

"What are you staring at? Don't be afraid, I'm not a bad lot. Drive me to the Finnish Consulate in the Ekaterinhofsky Prospect; you'll be paid there."

"I wasn't thinking of that! The Lord be with you! As if we didn't know what sort of people they put into that gaol! I looked at you because you seemed so cheerful. Have you been in prison for long?"

"Two years; I've come from the Solovky."

The cabman turned round, looked me straight in the face, and said, as only a Russian man of the people can say it:

"O Lord, my God, Christ save us and have mercy on us!"

We drove for a long time through the deserted, snow-covered streets without exchanging another word. From time to time the old man gave a senile cackle and repeated:

"O Lord! what a business! Christ save us and have mercy upon us!"

At the Consulate my appearance had the effect of a thunder-clap; my fellow-countrymen seemed almost more moved than I was myself. I felt like a man in a dream. A lighted Christmas-tree stood in the great hall. I caught sight of my reflection in a mirror on the wall—and recoiled in horror. Now I understood why my friends looked at me with eyes bright with tears.

How unaccustomed, how strange to sit in a beautiful white bath and wash at one's leisure! There was a bottle of lotion, a razor, a manicure-set! . . . Two o'clock. I lay awake. How unaccustomed it was to lie in a soft, wide bed, on a clean sheet, under a silk quilt! The portraits of my dear ones looked at me from the little table at my bedside.

.

I spent six days at the Consulate without putting my nose into the street. I walked in the courtyard and Europeanized myself.

At last all the permits and necessary documents were obtained, and one morning I drove to the station of the Finland Railway accompanied by the Consul-General, the counsellor of our Ministry for Foreign Affairs, a diplomatic courier and an employee of the Consulate.

We occupied a compartment and all sat in silence. Silence is golden, and in Russia more than golden.

At Bieloostrov Tchekists came through the carriage and examined our passports. All went smoothly. At about four in the afternoon we were on Finnish soil. The whole nightmare was a thing of the past. I recalled the words of the cabman, the last Soviet citizen with whom I had talked:

“Christ save us and have mercy on us!”

APPENDIX

I

EXTRACT FROM NEWSPAPER *Hufvudstadsbladet*, OF HELSINGFORS,
NOVEMBER 13, 1925

A Finnish citizen, Mr. Boris Cederholm, was arrested in Petrograd for unexplained reasons on April 2, 1924. Since then he has been detained in various prisons in Petrograd, and his health is understood to be completely shattered. His family in Helsingfors have had to contend with the severest hardships and difficulties.

The Foreign Office has made representations to the Council of People's Commissaries, but without any result. Our Consulate-General in Petrograd lately sent a communication to the effect that Mr. Cederholm had been declared to be a free man and might return to Finland. Two days, however, before the order for Mr. Cederholm's release was issued Mr. Cederholm had been sent with a transport of prisoners to Solovetsky Island in the White Sea.

Mr. Cederholm's wife, through her solicitor, handed a written statement concerning the matter to the President of the Republic on September 29th; she has since been informed that Mr. Cederholm was sent to Solovetsky Island by mistake and that he has been recalled to Petrograd by wireless. According to a report from the Finnish Consulate-General, he is believed at present to be detained in the Shpalernaja prison in Petrograd. No definite steps towards sending him to Finland, however, appear to have been taken.

In a letter to the Attorney-General, dated November 9th, Mrs. Cederholm's solicitor insists that the question is obviously one of life or death for a Finnish citizen, and begs that such measures may be taken as are calculated to lead to a settlement of the affair in a manner desirable in the interests of both republics.

II

EXTRACT FROM *Hufvudstadsbladet*, DECEMBER 13, 1925

The deputies Ernst Estlander and Ernst von Born¹ on Friday handed in the following question to the President of the Chamber:

"MR. PRESIDENT!

"The following facts have come to our notice. [The deputies recapitulate the facts stated in *Hufvudstadsbladet* of November 13th, and ask:] Have measures been taken to secure Mr. Cederholm's release, and, if this is not the case, what does the Government consider itself able to do in the matter?"

¹ Leading members of the Swedish Party in the Finnish Chamber.

III

EXTRACT FROM *Hufvudstadsbladet*, DECEMBER 28, 1925

According to a communication received by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs from Petrograd, Mr. Boris Cederholm was released from prison late on the night of Christmas Eve.

IV

FINNISH CONSULATE-GENERAL IN LENINGRAD, No. 1810, SEPTEMBER 27, 1924. TO THE AGENCY OF THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN LENINGRAD

At the beginning of March last a Finnish subject, Alexis Alexandrovitch Koponen, was arrested in Leningrad, and a month later Boris Leonidovitch Cederholm, also a Finnish subject, both being accused, *according to information received from the Agency of the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs*, of dealings in contraband of war. The Consulate-General has now received information to the effect that Mr. Koponen has been transported to the interior of Russia by administrative order, while the Consulate has no news at all regarding Mr. Cederholm's fate.

The Consulate-General consequently has the honour to ask for information as to the state of the case in which the two above-named Finnish citizens are involved.

REPLY:

October 15, 1924, No. 1475.—The Agency of the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R. in Leningrad begs to inform the Finnish Consulate-General that the Finnish subject Cederholm, Boris Leonidovitch, is under sentence of three years' imprisonment in the Solovetsky concentration camp, and that Koponen, Alexei Alexandrovitch, was imprisoned in the Solovetsky concentration camp on September 24th last for a term of three years.

V

FINNISH CONSULATE-GENERAL IN LENINGRAD, AUGUST 29, 1925.
TO THE AGENCY OF THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN LENINGRAD

Following personal conversations with the director of the juridical section of the Agency of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, Citizen Janovsky, the Finnish Consulate-General has the honour to bring to the notice of the Agency the following facts: The Consulate-General received from the Finnish Mission in Moscow a copy of a note from the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, dated August 25, No. 1669, which stated that there was no obstacle to the departure for Finland of the Finnish citizen, B. L. Cederholm, then under arrest in Leningrad. When, however, a lady on the staff of the

Consulate-General visited the D.P.Z. on August 28th, with a parcel for Mr. Cederholm, she was informed that Mr. Cederholm had just been sent to the Solovetsky concentration camp. The Consulate-General therefore begs the Agency to take vigorous measures to secure Mr. Cederholm's return to Leningrad with a view to his departure for Finland, and to keep the Consulate-General informed of subsequent developments.

[The communication from the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, referred to in the above note, was as follows: "In reply to the note of the Finnish Legation in Moscow, dated July 14, 1925, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs begs to inform the Finnish Legation, in a verbal note dated August 25, 1925, No. 1669, that there is no obstacle to Citizen Cederholm's departure for Finland."]

VI

(a) FINNISH CONSULATE-GENERAL IN LENINGRAD, No. 1863, SEPTEMBER 10, 1925

A telegram from Popoff Island has been received from the Finnish citizen Boris Leonidovitch Cederholm, who was transported to the Solovetsky concentration camp on August 26th last, asking that in view of his bad state of health the necessary clothing may be sent him.

As this telegram shows that Mr. Cederholm is still in ignorance of the order for his release issued by the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, the Finnish Consulate-General, following its communication of August 29th last, No. 1773, has the honour once more to beg the Agency of the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs for its co-operation to enable Mr. Cederholm to return to Leningrad in the immediate future in order that he may leave for Finland.

(b) TELEGRAM:

SOLOVSKY, POPOFF ISLAND, CONCENTRATION CAMP. CEDERHOLM.

Note *Narkomindel*¹ August 25th states no obstacle your departure Finland therefore only small parcels sent September 22.

FINNISH CONSULATE.

VII

In reply to the communication of December 18, 1925, No. 5518, the Agency of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs in Leningrad begs to inform the Finnish Consulate-General in Leningrad that permission has been given for an employee of the Consulate-General to have an interview with the imprisoned Finnish citizen Cederholm, who is detained in the D.P.Z.

¹ The Russian portmanteau word signifying "People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs".

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